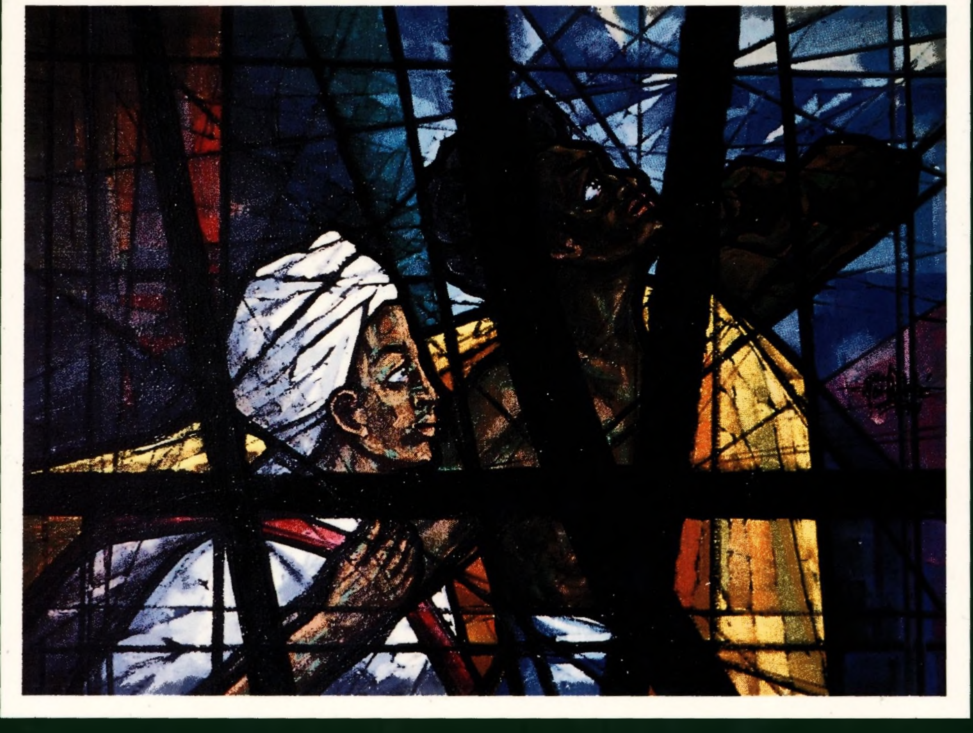
THE CHALLENGES OF DROUGHT

Ethiopia's Decade Of Struggle In Relief And Rehabilitation



The Relief & Rehabilitation Commission

ETHIOPIA, one of the oldest nation states in the world, with a virtually uninterrupted record of independence, has faced natural disasters throughout its long history. It is only in recent years, however, that there has been a full organized institutional response to the consequences of droughts and other natural calamities with the establishment of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission at the onset of the Ethiopian Revolution, just over a decade ago.

Since its inception, the RRC has not only brought relief to millions of people in drought-affected areas of Ethiopia, but has also paid special attention to rehabilitation of drought victims in order to enable them to become once again fully self-sufficient and productive members of society. For these reasons, the RRC is recognized as the best and most efficient organization of its kind in the continent of Africa.

The RRC is publishing this book at a time when the country is again suffering from the effects of a severe drought, and when world attention has been sharply focused on Ethiopia's drought problems and on the country's immediate and longer-term needs in the sectors of relief and rehabilitation. An absorbing account of the history of drought in Ethiopia, and of the activities of the RRC during the last decade, *The Challenges of Drought* will give the reader a new insight into the problems faced by one African country having to deal with the effects of drought, and into some of the successes that have been achieved.

The book examines the role of domestic and international sources of humanitarian assistance, including the activities of non-governmental organizations, in combating both the immediate and longer-term effects of drought through relief and rehabilitation activities. It also examines the need for increased rehabilitation and development assistance as the only way to mitigate the effects of future droughts, and calls for increased international involvement in this important initiative.

In short, *The Challenges of Drought* is essential reading for anyone concerned about the present crisis in Africa and, more especially, Ethiopia. It will give the reader greater understanding of how one country, through the efforts of a relatively new institution, is attempting to meet perhaps the greatest challenge that Africa has had to face in the modern era.

ISBN 0 946825 01 7

THE FRONT cover is from the original painting entitled *Wede Sefera*! (Towards Rehabilitation) by Maître Artiste Afewerk Tekle. Maître Tekle is Ethiopia's world-renowned painter whose works have been highly acclaimed and exhibited throughout Europe and America. Collectors, too, cherish his exquisite canvases and artefacts which now adorn many private homes.

The cover painting expresses the poignancy of those whose lives have been repeatedly struck by drought and their determination to rehabilitate themselves. The morale of the family is also reflected and the people's struggle to lift themselves out of destitution and into a brighter future.

THE CHALLENGES OF DROUGHT

ETHIOPIA'S DECADE OF STRUGGLE IN RELIEF AND REHABILITATION

The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, Addis Ababa
1985

The recurrent drought, which has been striking part of our country, in cyclical pattern, has been going on for quite a long time. The very fact that the drought has come in this recurrent pattern also suggests the extent of the damage and also gives an insight into the type of solutions that must be sought.

We have resolutely confronted this grave problem and are overcoming it through the struggle, staunch morale, courage and united effort of our people.

Our efforts are not limited to bringing about transient solutions; we are marching ever forward by laying down firm bases for lasting progress and prosperity.

For this, of course, we want the cooperation and the assistance of all people in the world that are committed to peace and humanism.

We would like to express our gratitude to all those who have hitherto stood on our side, and shall do the same in the future so that our efforts shall bear fruit.

Excerpts from the speeches of Comrade Mengistu Haile Mariam,
General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Workers Party of Ethiopia (WPE),
Chairman of the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC), and Commander in Chief of the Revolutionary Armed Forces.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission would like to put on record its profound gratitude for the cooperation of various individuals, government agencies, voluntary organizations and UN bodies in the course of preparing this book.

This book is written by the
Relief and Rehabilitation Commission,
Addis Ababa, with design and
production services by
H&L Communications Ltd.,
85/87 Jermyn Street,
London SW1Y 6JD

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CONTENTS

COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE 11

INTRODUCTION 19

CHAPTER 1
A Profile of the Ethiopian Economy and its Susceptibility to Natural Disasters 31

CHAPTER 2
Drought and Famine in Ethiopia: A Historical Perspective 55

CHAPTER 3
The Drought of 1972-74: False Pride and a Failure of Bureaucracy 77

CHAPTER 4
The Founding of the RRC and its First Phase of Activities, March-August 1974 93

CHAPTER 5
A Two-Pronged Response to Natural Calamities: The Second Phase of the RRC's Activities, September 1974-August 1977 105

CHAPTER 6
Expanded Responsibilities Under the Dual Effects of Somalia's Invasion and Natural Calamities: The Third Phase of RRC Activities, September 1977-August 1979 129

CHAPTER 7
Wider Human and Environmental Rehabilitation Efforts: Phase Four of RRC Activities, September 1979-December 1983 141

CHAPTER 8
The 1984-85 Drought: Phase Five of RRC Activities 171

CHAPTER 9
Domestic and International Assistance 203

CONCLUSION
The Struggle for Self-Sufficiency 227

NOTES 243

APPENDICES 253

INDEX 277

COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE

IT is just over 10 years since the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission was established and during that time it has come to be regarded as one of the most dedicated and efficient organizations in Ethiopia. People throughout the country have benefited in one way or another from the practical concern of the RRC's personnel as they take food to those starving in the drought-stricken areas, bring medical care, and boost morale by reuniting families and providing them with the means to start life afresh.

To the millions of farmers and pastoralists reeling in the sun from the effects of hunger, thirst and destitution, the presence among them of a compassionate group of workers serves to restore a sense of their own human worth. The equipment which the RRC brings to drill wells, the water-pumps it has installed, the seeds it has distributed and the livestock it has replaced have done more than save innumerable lives: these pragmatic actions have had a broader dimension in that they have helped people to perceive again their dignity and self-respect.

It is precisely this awareness of the people's physical suffering and of their mental torment and despair that distinguishes the new social order from the old one it replaced in September 1974. Instead of trying to conceal the extent of the suffering in the countryside; instead of denying that there actually was a drought at all, as the previous regime did almost to the last day of its existence, the Revolutionary Government, as soon as it took power, nurtured an organization whose sole and specific purpose was to save the lives of drought victims and get them going again in the rural economy. This new organization was the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission.

An important characteristic of the way the relief operation was handled, right from the inception of the RRC, was its ingenuity, level-headedness and lack of false pride. Unlike the lords of the imperial era whose privilege it had been to collect tribute from the peasant farmers whom they exploited, the RRC did all in its power to organize campaigns whose purpose was the voluntary collection of all kinds of assistance to help the people made destitute by the disaster. The Commission was not impelled in its dealings with the world by a feudal arrogance and sense of superiority which made it psychologically impossible to acknowledge that the imperial era had become a dead-end incapable of dealing effectively with drought. A hallmark of the RRC is that it has always openly sought assistance from the international community. It has always accepted that, as an underdeveloped country, Ethiopia lacks the funds, the skills, the expertise and the technology to undo the damage of the drought by itself.

This maturity is the mark of a modern understanding. We are happy to place on record our gratitude for, and deep appreciation of, the thoughtful concern, material aid and substantial amounts of solid cash that have come in from the international community. As a nation struggling under the heavy blows which nature persists in striking at us, it warms our hearts to know that international organizations, governments, development agencies, churches and ordinary families and individuals have felt our suffering enough to give so generously of their money and time.

Throughout the world, children of all ages, unemployed people and old-age pensioners, among others, have continued to pour out sympathy and assistance according to their means. The generosity of individuals in response to the suffering of our people is unprecedented in modern times. A Scottish couple, Mr. and Mrs. West, sold their house to live in a trailer so they could donate the proceeds to relief work. People in show business also came forward. Bob Geldof of Great Britain, who organized the Band Aid recording of "Do they know it's Christmas?", asked people to suspend taste, choice and judgement to keep someone alive on Christmas Day. A whole galaxy of stars in America subsequently produced a record entitled "We are the World" in a fund-raising venture for victims of hunger in Africa.

At the national level, the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany proclaimed "A Day for Africa", thus joining the forces against famine. And in the United States, Jersey City in the state of New Jersey proclaimed December 17th, 1984 as "Ethiopia Aid Day". In Canada, Halifax adopted a town in one of the drought-stricken areas. The Children of New York, many from low-income families, took part in a variety of fund-raising schemes in their own communities, producing for Ethiopia the magnificent sum of $700,000.

The Ethiopian catastrophe has had the effect of drawing together all kinds of worlds in a joint-venture on behalf of what must be one of the most deprived groups of people on earth. In the field here in Ethiopia, people of many nationalities have worked with our compatriots in a concerted humanitarian mission to bring relief to those suffering from the heavy burdens imposed by drought and famine. One example of this cooperation has been the airlifting and airdropping of relief supplies that has brought together aircraft and crews from the Soviet Union, United States, Federal Republic of Germany, United Kingdom, German Democratic Republic and Poland in a combined airdropping operation in remote and otherwise inaccessible areas of Ethiopia.

Donor governments, organizations and individuals throughout the world responded to the RRC's call. The Soviet Union, in an act of great generosity, airlifted 36 aircraft and 300 trucks to Ethiopia, a logistical feat of major proportions. Similarly, the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force was present in Ethiopia within 24 hours of agreement being reached between the two governments. Journalists, humanitarians and dignitaries began to arrive in large numbers to see for themselves what was happening in the drought-affected regions of the country. Drought and its associated problems began to hit the headlines of the international mass media. A veritable surge of solidarity with Ethiopia's suffering millions was expressed by large numbers of people all over the world. Larger pledges of grain and other much-needed relief supplies were made, and shipments of the assistance began to arrive at the ports with greater frequency and in larger volumes. Mercy flights from all corners of the world brought precious cargoes, and innumerable men and women reached into their pockets and purses to help the unfortunate in Ethiopia.

But for this outpouring of humanitarian assistance, the enormity of the drought's consequences would have been too horrific to imagine. The RRC wishes to express its sincere appreciation and to pay a well-deserved tribute to the donor governments, NGOs, the UN system, specialized agencies and to the individual men, women and children everywhere who mobilized themselves to alleviate the plight of the drought victims in our country. We are deeply grateful for this concern and compassion shown by the international community; it has strengthened our resolve to meet the challenge facing our country.

The challenge to the donor community is that it now extend its concern and generosity to the RRC's long-term programme to make the drought victims self-reliant farmers. Having done so much to rescue so many people from starvation and death, the international community would be taking a logical step forward if it now helped to provide those inputs that are needed to bring an end to dependence on foreign assistance. There is at present a very good opportunity to enable people in the drought-prone areas to break out of their cycle of dependence and to start leading self-sufficient productive lives. The RRC is therefore requesting the same kind of response to its rehabilitation programme as was shown in response to the relief needs. It is painful to contemplate an increase in the number of hungry people when we know that the provision of simple agricultural inputs such as seeds, draught-oxen, tractors, handtools and fertilizers would help to usher in a period of relative plenty. Unless the international community does become involved in our long-term rehabilitation programme, the present crisis will undoubetedly continue and we will again be faced with a massive human disaster.

The Government and people of Ethiopia are fully aware, however, that while international assistance is crucially important to the relief and rehabilitation activies, the most decisive factor will always be the conviction and determination of Ethiopia's people to withstand the effects of the drought. Galvanized by the concern and action of their Government, the people of Ethiopia have thrown themselves wholeheartedly into the relief and rehabilitation projects launched by the Government over the past decade. They have joined medical teams tending to the ill and disabled; they have built homes, constructed roads and have set up shelters in remote areas to store precious supplies; they have driven convoys of trucks over gruelling, roadless terrain to get the large amounts of grain to the distribution points; and they have done this and much other work with a willingness that has not faded after long, exhausting months. Guided by the Workers Party of Ethiopia, Ethiopians are still doing everything they can to reduce the suffering of their countrymen in the afflicted zones. In February 1985 a law was enacted whereby all nationals will contribute one month's wages out of their annual earnings to help the victims of famine.

This book is an attempt by an action-oriented organization to tell the story of its activities over 10 years. It is a fairly detailed record of how the RRC has responded to the challenge of drought and human misery on a scale that is probably unprecedented on the African continent. Necessarily, it contains accounts of cooperation with a whole range of private and government agencies which have come from overseas to help limit the devastation that is still disfiguring our landscape.

Ethiopia's food shortages will not be solved by short-term emergency assistance, however, crucially important though this is to people who are hungry right now. What we require also is support for long-term rehabilitation work designed to make the needy independent and economically productive. Sir Shridath S. Ramphal, Commonwealth Secretary-General, placed the problem in proper perspective when he said: 'If the only international response to the Ethiopian famine is a brief emotional spasm of anguish and generosity, little will have been achieved in relation to the magnitude of the crisis of hunger worldwide. What is required is a sustained, long-term commitment to the problems of poverty and underdevelopment. One must hope that the enormous upsurge of popular feeling in the richer countries, which has forced even the most reluctant governments to take action over Ethiopia, will similarly spur governments to make that long-term commitment.'[1]

Such a commitment requires, moreover, that we abandon the absurd idea that people can go on living in such large numbers in the barren highland areas of our country where the last layers of topsoil are now being carried away by erosion. The highlands are barren. Little grows there. They had been cultivated for about 3,000 years before the nutrients in the earth began to be exhausted. Instead of letting the soil lie fallow, however, or instead of putting life back into it, the peasant farmers in their desperate need to eke out a living kept on overworking the land. In the end, like the homesteaders in Oklahoma, USA in the 1930s, they began to notice that dust was an integral part of their lives, that the foundation of agriculture had finally crumbled and was now blowing away in the wind. Jon Tinker, Director of Earthscan, the International Institute for Environment and Development, has studied the dynamics of land degradation. 'Land-hungry people clear a few hectares,' he observes, 'farm them until the land is exhausted, then move on to another patch. Each time, they find somewhere less and less suitable for permanent farming: steeper slopes, thinner soils, harder work, lower yields. And they leave behind a land which will probably never be productive again.' [2]

Since most of the highland areas are no longer capable of supporting the large communities that they have supported in the past, it makes good sense to resettle the people in more fertile areas in the south and south-west of the country which also happen to be relatively under-populated. The RRC is centrally involved in carrying out this policy of resettling, on a voluntary basis, about 300,000 families from the northern regions of Wello and Tigrai, despite misguided criticism of this programme in some places overseas. Our rationale is similar to the much larger transmigration programme being implemented in Indonesia where about 3 million people are now moving from the overcrowded island of Java to the outer islands of Sumatra, Sulawesi and Kalimantan where agricultural production will help reduce that country's huge food-import bill.

Mr. Michael McGowan, the British Member of European Parliament for Leeds, visited Ethiopia in January 1985 and travelled to the drought-stricken region of Tigrai to see for himself the conditions there. 'Emergency camps and feeding centres do not offer a long-term solution,' he said. He confirmed that much of northern Ethiopia was a dustbowl where erosion has destroyed any chance of agriculture for many years, if not for generations.

'The Ethiopian Government is being criticized for its resettlement programme, but none of the critics has come up with an alternative solution,' Mr. McGowan said. And as Mr. McGowan rightly pointed out, it is hypocritical of the West to applaud the resettlement of our Falasha community thousands of miles away in a foreign land, and yet condemn the resettlement within Ethiopia. Indeed, this uprooting of people from their homeland is an interference in Ethiopia's internal affairs and has had the tacit support of some Western governments.

The experience of the last year, with the RRC having to deal with the tragic effects of one of the worst droughts to have hit Ethiopia this century, has exemplified the foresight shown in the establishment of an institution such as the RRC, with its twin responsibilities in the relief field of predicting when and where food shortages might occur and of managing the response to such food crises in a coordinated manner. Without such an institution, and without the experienced and committed staff working in the RRC, all the domestic and international assistance that was provided would not have been as effective as it has been in the saving of millions of lives. Although the response from donors has been magnificent, it has nevertheless not been sufficient to cover all the relief needs as outlined in the RRC's many appeals; because of the existence of this experienced institution, however, the assistance that has been provided has been used in the most effective and efficient way, without waste or duplication.

Personally, it has been an honour for me to have worked and to continue to work in an institution such as the RRC, and in cooperation with so many different people from around the world, over the last few years, and it should be stressed that whatever success we have achieved has been because of the excellent cooperation between agencies and the RRC that there has been. And it has been eminently worthwhile to have attempted to depoliticize humanitarian aid, and to have worked with people and governments of every conceivable background, for the sake of the deprived and hungry.

The purpose of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission has been, since its inception in 1974, to bring succour to the victims of drought and to work towards the goal of long-term food security in Ethiopia. This book is an account of the difficulties we have faced and the efforts we have made in that direction. It is therefore a book about our achievements and also about problems and frustrations on an epic scale in which our aspirations are defined by the solutions we strive for and the kind of results we seek.

DAWIT WOLDE GIORGIS
Addis Ababa
August 1985

INTRODUCTION

Milestones on the Road to Self-Sufficiency

THE Ethiopian Revolution of 1974 took place within the context of a severe drought which has continued almost without respite right up to the present. The indignation and anger aroused by the imperial regime's contempt for, and lack of interest in, the people's misery and suffering became a powerful wave that finally swept the emperor away along with the rest of the aristocratic class. The condition of the peasants on the land had much to do with the groundswell of resentment that broke through the old barriers and opened a new era in the country's long history.

The structure of landholding in feudal Ethiopia and the quality of relations between the peasant and his lord will be examined at some length in Chapter 2, but here the objective conditions for the Revolution are emphasised. This will provide the background against which the measures taken by the new regime should be assessed. Indeed, the drought and its effects having been one of Ethiopia's top priorities over the last 10 years, the most logical way to judge the present Government's achievements is to focus on the steps it has taken, the institutions it has established, in order to return the country to an even keel and to self-sufficiency in food.

What are you to do, Jon Tinker, Director of Earthscan asks, 'if you are poor and landless; if there are no jobs in the cities and no soil in the countryside; if all the best land is given over to cotton or bananas, and owned by a few rich families or multinational corporations; if all the poor land is already occupied and reoccupied by other peasants nearly as poor as you are; if every year there are more and more of the poor and landless; if any attempt at peaceful political change is ruthlessly suppressed? In these circumstances, is it surprising that many turn to revolution, armed uprising, guerrilla movements?' [1] This question, though intended as a general description of conditions in underdeveloped countries that sometimes trigger off vast social and economic changes, is uncannily close to the way things were in Ethiopia before September 1974. The soil erosion, the landlessness, the drought and the famine which had killed about 200,000 people in the northern regions of Wello and Tigrai failed to elicit a serious response from the imperial government. Instead, the ruling stratum of society managed to ignore the death-toll and the spreading destitution and to continue enjoying rich banquets at the emperor's court. This was possible because, as Professor Sen argues convincingly, 'While famines involve fairly widespread acute starvation, there is no reason to think that it will affect all groups in the famine-affected nation. Indeed, it is by no means clear that there has ever occurred a famine in which all groups in a country have suffered from starvation, since different groups typically do have very different commanding powers over food, and an over-all shortage brings out the contrasting powers in stark clarity.' [2]

People die of starvation, not because there is no food available, but because they lack the purchasing power to buy food or the legal entitlement to receive adequate quantities. Just as a particular pattern of class relations makes it possible for some people within a country to go on eating well while the majority around them are dying in large numbers, so it is possible for a nation as a whole to succumb to drought and famine while the granaries of Europe and America are overflowing and there are mountains of meat and fruit and vegetables. The mechanism whereby this state of affairs operates is enunciated succinctly by Susan George at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, DC: 'The whole point of an integrated world food system is that one produces not for human need but for "the market". In "the market", whether national or international, if you don't pay, you don't play. Companies who find paying customers orient demand, and if demand runs to strawberries in February, strawberries will be grown regardless of the pressing food needs of powerless and penniless people.'[3]

Not only was the Ethiopian ruling class eating its way through the famine, however. It was compounding the difficulties wrought by soil erosion and lack of rainfall by insisting that the tenant farmers pay their rents and feudal dues. There was no let up in these exacting demands. The aristocracy showed not the slightest willingness to waive the payments in view of the dire circumstances; this is discussed by Cohen and Weintraub in their book entitled *Land and Peasants in Imperial Ethiopia: The Social Background to a Revolution.* [4] Those who could no longer pay the rents and dues were evicted from the land. Even some landowners, especially those with only small areas under cultivation and few livestock, exhausted their reserves in due course, had to sell their plots at falling prices and join the drift of the landless in a hopeless search for security. [5]

So the scenario just before the Revolution was of a government bent on impoverishing its own people, uninterested in the condition of the soil and affecting to be unaware of the heavy toll being taken by the drought. This is the background against which the Revolutionary Government's achievements should be seen. And of course, the first characteristic of the new regime is that it was impelled to power by what it felt to be the need for wide-ranging reforms in the country's economic and social relations. Right from the start, therefore, the Provisional Military Administrative Council demonstrated its awareness that the causes of the people's suffering lay in the network of feudal relations and in the peasants' susceptibility to economic exploitation.

Jack Shepherd, a senior associate of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, has outlined that susceptibility in these words: 'Until the overthrow of Haile Selassie in 1974 the Ethiopian peasant lived and died in social conditions similar to those of European peasants of the Middle Ages. He paid a land tax that might take up to three-quarters of what he produced, and education and health taxes that returned neither schooling nor decent medical treatment. He supplied produce, firewood and labour to his landlord's house and granary, and gifts at holiday time. Even the so-called "communal system" in Wello and Tigrai peeled off half the peasant's productivity and gave it to the landlord.'[6]

The peasants' inability to withstand the rigours of drought stems directly from this traditional siphoning off of their wealth by the upper classes of yesteryear. They were never left with enough to set some aside in case of shortages. Droughts therefore always spelled disaster for them. The reason why they suffered and died whenever the rains failed for any extended period is that they were poor. To address the causes of their poverty would be to reduce the effects of drought and the toll taken by famine.

That is precisely what the Government did with its proclamation of 1975. It unchained the peasants from their traditional indebtedness. It nationalized all the country's land, limiting private holdings to 10 hectares. And in doing so it brought an end to landlords and the whole feudal system from which they had derived their legitimacy. This single act has enabled the nation to embark upon the modern era. Whatever trials and tribulations the country encounters in the future, this unchaining of the peasants from their erstwhile masters will probably remain the most far-reaching reform in Ethiopia's history.

The Government could not, of course, change the weather. The drought has persisted. Locally grown food has fallen in quality and volume. Livestock – goats, cattle, camels – have perished in great numbers. Following their age-old practices, peasants in the highland areas particularly have continued to work the exhausted land, degrading it further and thus placing its recuperative powers in greater jeopardy. These are problems bequeathed by the imperial past which the lack of rain since 1974 has been compounding and rendering ever more difficult. Despite nature's merciless pounding, however; despite the fact that the drought has become a more or less constant feature of national life, with pests exacerbating the already bad situation, a series of other steps have also been taken by the Government aimed at increased food production and eventual self-sufficiency for those vulnerable to drought.

The principal milestones on Ethiopia's road to self-sufficiency, which are of course achievements of the Revolution, are as follows:

Land distribution

The 1975 reforms led to a more equitable distribution of one of the most important factors of production in a rural economy – land. For the first time in Ethiopian history, the tenant farmer was released from bondage and became a free and respectable member of society. Just how fundamental this change has been is explained by a political economist: '. . . the social profile of Ethiopia's rural community has been substantially altered since the proclamation of 1975. Not only has tenancy as well as landlordism been abolished, but *landlessness has also been done away with.* In terms of the relationship of the producer to his means of production, all differences have been eliminated, and each peasant now holds usufruct right over the land that he employs for his livelihood.'[7]

Extension of social justice

The destruction of the peasant-landlord relationship has put the peasants on a par with everyone else in respect of rights and privileges and, by ending the peasants' vulnerability to plunder, has vastly extended both social and economic justice. As one writer has observed: 'When one considers that this "self-managing peasant" is organized in peasant associations, of varied and uneven strength but never hollow, the true scale of the revolutionary transformation becomes all the more evident and impressive. This, then, is where the mass population upheaval that started as a struggle against absolutism and its class basis has presently come to – a sort of rural peasant republic.'

Creation of cooperatives

These reforms in their turn led to the creation of cooperatives. Some 5.5 million farm families have to date been organized under farmers' associations, and around 4.5 million people have become members of 3,913 service cooperatives throughout the 14 administrative regions of the country. One of the main functions of the service cooperatives is the distribution of agricultural inputs, arrangement of credit facilities and the marketing of members' produce. The service cooperatives also serve as vehicles for the development of rural industry and training of all kinds.

This peasant organizational structure has been followed by a still higher form of cooperative which is known as the producers' cooperative. Under this system of cooperation, farmers pool all their resources to work and produce together. Some 1,489 producers' cooperatives with a population of around 100,000 farm families have come together for this purpose. Although still at an early stage of development, the producers' cooperatives, through their own efforts and with the Government's assistance, are expected to bring about tremendous improvements in Ethiopian agriculture and eventually transform it into a socialist agriculture.

Input distribution

The Government has already been a catalyst in this transformation process through its unstinting assistance to and support for the cooperatives. The distribution of farm inputs has played a major part in this support. Since 1975-76, the Government has distributed 8,970 metric tons of selected seeds, 320,636 tons of fertilizers and 1,732,269 litres of pesticides.

Upgrading of farmers' skills and literacy

A number of initiatives have also been taken to upgrade the skills and general knowledge of farmers. The main step in this direction has been the mass literacy campaign which has reduced the illiteracy rate to less than 37 per cent. The farmers' specific needs in the areas of general knowledge, information and skills training have been identified and appropriate steps taken to meet them. The long-term importance of these measures, the impact of knowledge on rural productivity, has been made clear by the agronomist René Dumont: 'Agricultural science is the practical farmer's consultant. Its domain is the whole range of organic life utilised by man. It raises the productivity of useful species by methods of selection which were once empirical but now rely increasingly on the science of genetics . . . the stage of development of any rural economy can be estimated by noting the degree to which the natural environment has been changed and the techniques employed to this end.' [8]

One of the measures taken in this direction is the farmers' training centre established at Agarfa in Bale region which can accommodate 2,000 farmers at a time for the duration of a six-month programme. More centres of this kind are envisaged at strategic locations within the next few years. In addition, the provision of minimum package services covering 440 *weredas* helps the peasants to improve their productivity. These packages have also paved the way for the disseminaton of agricultural information.

Environmental rehabilitation

The country has also thrown itself wholeheartedly into reconstructing the physical environment. The Government and peasant associations have raised and replanted some 622 million trees on an area covering 191,000 hectares of land. Parallel with this effort, some 110,000 kilometres of terraces have been built between 1978 and mid-1984 on land that has been prone to erosion. Moreover, some 2,695 kilometres of access roads have been constructed in the terraced areas. Referring to these measures to restore the country's ecology and to the rehabilitation programme generally, the environmental expert Lloyd Timberlake of Earthscan said 'they are doing precisely the right sort of thing. They are trying to alter these lands so that they retain soil, retain water, and can better stand up under drought conditions . . . You just can't do what you need to to the countryside to save it from disaster until you organize the peasants . . . Ethiopia is about the only African country doing this.'[9]

Harnessing water resources

The recurring drought has made it imperative to exploit the water resources of the country to the greatest extent possible. This has become one of the Government's top priorities. Aside from the small-scale water conservation drives that will be undertaken by local communities, the Government is planning some 113,000 hectares of large and medium-size irrigation schemes. Twenty of these schemes will be in Wello region.

Latest information indicates that Ethiopia's irrigation potential is over 2 million hectares. Around 100,000 hectares are already in use. The country's ability to be self-sufficient in food and to produce a surplus depends in part on how effectively it exploits its rivers and lakes. Though the Government is geared up to ensure the success of this programme, hard work will be required on the part of the communities involved and assistance from all good-intentioned people without whose participation little progress can be made.

Strengthening of the RRC

The urgency of the situation and the priority accorded by the Government to meeting the country's food needs and to dealing with the consequences of recurring drought is reflected in the strengthening of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission which was established in 1974, the year the Revolution took place. The RRC has been acclaimed as one of the best organizations of its kind among Less Developed Countries and the first such organization to be set up in Ethiopia, not only to implement relief programmes in a systematic manner, but also to follow up projects that would make the recurrence of famine less likely.

Nevertheless, the failure of the rains during the past three years in many areas of the country has created a state of ecological and human disaster in Ethiopia that is far beyond the resources of the RRC alone to control.

The Commission warned the world of the impending disaster in its March 1984 appeal, an appeal which had itself been preceded by a number of others. The international community was apprised of the situation in the following words:

> The present drought . . . has been aggravated by the failure of rain in the previous seasons; conditions have not permitted even one season's recovery time. Over 5 million people are expected to be facing food shortages during the current year in 13 of the administrative regions.

As a first move to save the situation from sliding out of control, the Government of Ethiopia set up a ministerial committee on 22 March 1984 charged with coordinating Government organizations' contributions and assisting the RRC in its relief and rehabilitation operations.[10]

The Commission distributed grain, vitamin-enriched foods and seeds via the 190 distribution centres and 21 shelters spread over 137 *weredas* in 54 *awrajas* of the country.[11] The RRC also set up 38 feeding stations and 114 medical and feeding personnel were assigned to work in them.[12] Tanker trucks and pick-up points were organized for the distribution of water, particularly in the nomadic areas of Sidamo and Shewa. Despite these actions, however, the serious and spreading nature of the drought negated many of the early efforts. The size of the problem in terms of surface area and numbers of people affected was unprecedented and called for colossal resources of expertise and funds. Yet there was virtually no response from the international community in support of the Government's efforts to arrest and begin to solve the growing problem in time. A further appeal for help was made in August 1984, but met with an equally lethargic reaction from donors. Meanwhile, the ravages of the drought continued unabated, threatening an estimated 10 million lives by the beginning of 1985. By then, the dimensions of the predicament had grown beyond the resources of the RRC alone to withstand.

Establishment of the National Committee for Relief and Rehabilitation

The drought was the main item on the agenda when the newly established Political Bureau of the Workers Party of Ethiopia – the country's highest political body – met on 26 October 1984. The matter was discussed in depth and among the results of this top-level meeting was the establishment of a National Committee for Relief and Rehabilitation under the chairmanship of Comrade Mengistu Haile Mariam, Ethiopia's Head of State. The Government's awareness of how serious the disaster had become, and its determination to withstand the calamity, has been demonstrated further by its creation of 12 committees under the umbrella of the National Committee, each chaired by a member of the political bureau of WPE charged with carrying out various tasks aimed at expediting the country's relief and rehabilitation programme.

These, then, have been some of the key measures taken by the Revolutionary Government to combat the effects of the drought and to lay the foundations for long-term solutions to Ethiopia's food shortages. They demonstrate a commitment to the nation's future prosperity. As regards the longer-term view, the Government has, among many other measures, made a significant start in settlement/resettlement programmes. The committee set up for this purpose had, by mid- 1985, already moved 150,000 families to settlement sites chosen by the National Committee for Relief and Rehabilitation. Ultimately, the plan is to transfer some 300,000 families from the hardest hit areas in the drought-prone regions to fertile parts of the country over the next few years. This movement of people is entirely voluntary. The objective is to make people productive and calls for long-term assistance for rehabilitation.

All reasonable people understand that panic-management or crisis-response contributes nothing to the long-term solution of the country's problems. Crucially important though short-term humanitarian aid is to people in distress, it is no substitute for projects which seek eventually to render foreign assistance unnecessary. What Ethiopia now requires is a commitment from the international community to help finance irrigation, forestry, crop varieties, fertilizers, communications and health schemes whose effects will be to strengthen the country's agriculture and open it up to subsequent improvement. Colin Spedding, Professor of Agriculture at the University of Reading in England, puts it this way: 'There's got to be a concerted attempt to get beyond a crisis response. Ways have to be devised of getting aid to people who can *benefit* from it not just now but in the future. The crisis framework leaves nothing permanent in the economy of the receiving country.' [13]

The primary purpose of this book is to keep those who are interested in the welfare of Ethiopia fully informed of our efforts, to give due recognition to the participation of our donors and to call for increased international assistance. Examination of the RRC's activities over the last decade has been arranged chronologically in five phases.

During the First Phase (March 1974 to August 1974) more and more people were being displaced and starvation was so widespread that the imperial government was compelled to create an institution responsible for the campaign to mobilize resources for relief. The new institution started with the appointment of a Commissioner in February 1974, supported only by a six-man staff responsible for initiating Phase I of RRC activities. The Commission faced innumerable difficulties, one of which was financial constraints. Nevertheless, it took upon itself the responsibility of reaching out to and feeding from its meagre relief supplies millions of hungry people. It also did everything in its power to campaign for more resources in terms of increased effort to attain self-sufficiency in food and also by appealing directly to the international community.

During the Second Phase (September 1974 to August 1977) the continuing severity of the drought made it necessary that the RRC should be strengthened. To this effect, Order No. 93/1974 was issued, establishing a more vigorous organization with expanded duties and responsibilities. In the Second Phase, the organization's financial and manpower needs were partially met. The Commission acquired budgetary allocations from the Government and was empowered to solicit funds both from domestic and international sources to help achieve its objectives. Furthermore, it was accorded special powers that greatly facilitated its emergency operations. These powers enabled the Commission to utilize material resources and personnel at the disposal of Ministries and other Government organizations to combat the effects of the drought. The Government extended duty-free privileges to the Commission, exempting from any taxes all goods and services destined for disaster victims. The Commission's resource base was further fortified by a Proclamation by the Government (Proclamation No. 093/1974) empowering the Commission to collect surtax on the salaries of all Government employees earning above 250 birr a month – a month's salary from all employees was payable over a year towards the life-saving effort. Such measures reduced the death toll markedly.

Alongside its relief activities, the RRC also strengthened its self-sufficiency packages with the distribution of seeds, oxen and other agricultural items as well as with infrastructural development work the explicit purpose of which was to enable the victims of drought at least to recover.

During the Third Phase (September 1977-August 1979), the RRC spent much of its energy grappling with the effects of natural disasters. It was in this period, also, that Somalia's war of aggression in the Ogaden and the counter-revolutionary activities of secessionist bandits in northern Ethiopia forced an intensification of relief work. In addition to 3 million drought-affected Ethiopians, about 2.4 million people were displaced as a result of the military aggression and a further 360,000 people as a result of secessionist activities. All these uprooted people required the assistance of the RRC. But the available resources were simply not enough to meet the needs which had diversified and deepened so suddenly. A new dimension had been added to Ethiopia's landscape of disaster.

Side by side with relief activities, the Commission was involved in considerable resettlement and settlement programmes with the purpose of enabling the people involved to become self-sufficient in due course. Self-sufficiency packages were thus provided for the highland agricultural populations of Harerge region which were severely affected by Somalia's military incursion. Relief settlements were also started for the lowland and highland agriculturalists of Bale and Sidamo. These programmes proved to be effective and, within a span of two years, hundreds of thousands of people were able to support themselves.

The Fourth Phase of RRC activities (from September 1979 to December 1983) witnessed an expansion in the rehabilitative and development spheres which included land-reclamation and reafforestation programmes. Prior to this phase, the settlement activities were undertaken by three separate organizations, i.e. the RRC, the Awash Valley Development Agency, and the Settlement Authority. But because the three organizations were dealing with similar problems and were involved in similar activities, their use of resources was not particularly rational or efficient. The Fifth Phase, by presenting the RRC's activities from early 1984 onwards, brings the situation up to date, particularly as regards the resettlement of families in the more fertile areas of the south and west.

Established in the absence of any relevant social institution and therefore entrusted with the responsibility of caring for the destitute, dislocated and broken families, the RRC had to grapple with the vagaries of nature and meet the needs of the time. Its work is still going on because the drought is persisting and a great deal of past damage remains to be put right.

All attempts have been made to register the assistance received by beneficiaries directly from donors and through the RRC to date. The book does not claim, however, to contain exhaustive listings of this aid. In the early years of the RRC's activities we had to concentrate fully on the distribution of relief and had little time for paperwork. Lack of experience in relief activities, coupled with shortages of trained manpower to assess the situation and give operational guidance are further reasons why, for some time, aid donations were not substantially recorded. Efforts have, however, been made to strengthen and update the RRC's data bank. A computer system is in process of being installed; separate databases on the RRC's capacity, movement of vehicles and maintenance status will in due course yield information that will improve the quality of deployment. This in turn will have a positive impact on the solution of logistical problems, as will the computerization of the RRC's personnel data. The computer system will eventually enable the Commission's office in Addis Ababa to keep constantly abreast of developments in each of the country's drought-hit regions, thus enhancing the effectiveness of centralized decision-making. Data-exchange schemes and centralized registration mechanisms have also been set up. This book is the first attempt of its kind to gather all the material together and provide an overview; it is hoped that a more rigorous study will follow in due course.

CHAPTER 1

A PROFILE OF THE ETHIOPIAN ECONOMY AND ITS SUSCEPTIBILITY TO NATURAL DISASTERS

Historical Background

ETHIOPIA'S long history of independence dates back well before the birth of Christ to the bright yet shadowy glory of the Aksumite state whose achievements can be seen to this day in the ruins of its cities and towns, reservoirs and dams, temples and stelae – relics of one of the world's great civilisations. It is symbolic of the Ethiopian people's pride in their age-old independence that the country's classical language, Ge'ez – the root of no less than five present-day tongues, Amharic, Tigrinya, Tigre, Adare and Gurage – is derived from Ag'azyan, an early Ethiopian ethnic group inhabiting Serae in what is now the administrative region of Eritrea. The name Ag'azyan means 'the free'.

Throughout the ensuing millennia the Ethiopians in their mountains, valleys and plains fought hard to preserve their hard-won independence against many would-be invaders.

The struggle for national integrity was particularly intense in the 19th century. Emperor Tewodros II – a pioneer of a strong united Ethiopia – committed suicide at Magdala in 1868 rather than fall into the hands of a foreign invader. His successor Yohannes IV, after defeating another foreign aggressor at two major engagements at Gundet and Gura in 1875 and 1876, was killed in battle while repulsing a third, at Metemma in 1889. His notable commander Ras Alula Abba Negga had earlier won great fame by crushing the forces of a fourth aggressive power at Dogali in 1887.

In the following decade Emperor Menilek – founder of the modern Ethiopian state – won a resounding victory in 1896 at the Battle of Adwa, the greatest triumph of an African army over a European since the time of Hannibal. Ethiopia thus survived the European 'Scramble for Africa' which engulfed virtually the rest of the continent, and even for a time occupied the country's historic northern region where an Italian colony was established.

The 20th century brought no respite from foreign intervention. In 1906 the three neighbouring colonial powers, without consulting

Menilek, signed a Tripartite Treaty which sought to divide the country into three spheres of economic interest. Ethiopia, however, refused to accept such dismemberment.

An even greater threat to Ethiopia's integrity was to follow. Though the country had joined the League of Nations as early as 1923, it was attacked by fascist Italy in 1935. The invaders, who used all the instruments of modern warfare, including poison gas, were branded by the League as aggressors, but succeeded in overrunning much of the country. The Ethiopian patriots nevertheless fought on heroically until their country's eventual liberation in 1941. The five-year conflict had cost the victim nation over a quarter-million casualties.

Yet a further challenge to Ethiopia's national integrity came in our own day when, in the aftermath of the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974, Somalia's regime launched an unprovoked attack in 1977–78. The invaders advanced to the environs of two of Ethiopia's principal cities, Harar and Dire Dawa, but were duly repulsed. This fighting, as well as that carried out by secessionist forces in other parts of the country, has left a legacy of socio-economic and political problems which forms part of the story of this book.

As the preceding paragraphs indicate, the history of Ethiopia has been a history of struggle for survival. A major result of the various foreign military encroachments has been that the Ethiopian people have continually been preoccupied with maintaining their territorial integrity and national independence, with little attention being paid to the country's economic and scientific development. Ethiopians were forever involved in repelling the forces sent by external powers, so much so that they were sometimes even obliged to farm on the steep slopes of high mountains, which in due course led to serious soil erosion.

When one considers the wars waged by foreign invaders and by bandits in some corners of the country, it is not surprising that one wonders whether this law-abiding and peace-loving nation is destined always to be up in arms to defend its integrity and independence at the cost of economic and technological underdevelopment. Unfortunately, by fighting off the would-be foreign conquerors, the country has been forced to isolate itself from the rest of the world and to forfeit the benefits of technical achievements upon which social and economic progress are based.

In order to place Ethiopia's recurring drought in a proper context and to highlight the features against which the Government's pro-

Having been inhabited and intensively farmed since time immemorial, much of the land in the northern parts of Ethiopia has become exhausted and is presently incapable of supporting productive agriculture.

grammes are to be understood, it is appropriate to provide an outline of the national economy. It should be noted that, in spite of the positive socio-economic structural changes made during the last 10 years of the Revolution, recurring natural as well as man-made disasters have had the combined effect of slowing down the pace at which the economy is being transformed and modernized.

Resource Base[1]

Ethiopia consists of 1,224,000 square kilometres of land with greatly varying altitudes and climatic conditions and a wide variety of flora and fauna. The total population is now estimated to be around 42 million, with 86 per cent living in rural areas. The population growth rate had for many years been estimated at 2.5 per cent and now it is estimated to be 2.9 per cent. Of the total population, 49.4 per cent or 17.1 million are in the 15–59 years working age group. Within that group, 75.4 per cent or 12.9 million are economically active. It is thus obvious that the country has a large unskilled labour force, a significant proportion of which is unemployed or underemployed.

The country's principal known natural resource is its rich and large agricultural land. About 65 per cent of the total land area is considered to be suitable for cultivation and pasturage, though at present less than 20 per cent or about 16.7 million hectares of the total arable land is cultivated. Agricultural production, which is mainly for subsistence, is by and large in the hands of individual peasants who cultivate small and fragmented plots with primitive tools and implements and with practically no modern agricultural inputs to raise the level of production. The productivity of both land and labour is extremely low.

With respect to the size of animal resources, Ethiopia stands first in Africa and tenth in the world. However, because of the backward livestock-raising methods employed, there is heavy pressure on pasture land, resulting in over-grazing and soil erosion. On the other hand, the contribution of the livestock sub-sector to the country's Gross National Product is negligible. However, the potentiality is there if it can be properly utilized.

Around 100 years ago the country was renowned for its dense forests which covered about 40 per cent of its surface area. Since then the forest resources have been depleted and devastated through the expansion of cultivation, the reckless falling of trees for construction of dwellings and for firewood. Forests now cover less than 4 per cent of the land area of the country and it must be mentioned that deforestation has greatly contributed to soil erosion and thus to the serious recurring drought.

On the Red Sea coast, there are about 90,000 square kilometres of potential fishing ground with an estimated annual production potential of 66,000 tons of fish. In addition, the Rift Valley Lakes are estimated to have a potential output of over 26,000 tons of fish a year. However, the annual fish catch of the country at present ranges only from 600 to 1,200 tons.

The mining sector of the economy is at present the least developed. Several studies indicate that mineral resources such as oil, natural gas, gold, platinum, copper, potash, zinc, nickel, iron ore, coal and geothermal energy exist in various parts of the country. However, the quantity and quality of most of these mineral resources have not yet been fully determined owing to the low level of technology and lack of financial resources.

In the field of energy, Ethiopia has a considerable hydro-electric and geothermal power potential in its rivers and underground steam. The hydro-electric potential alone is estimated to be over 60 billion kW per year. At present the installed hydro-electric generating capacity is only 1.2 billion kW which only shows that this very important resource is yet untapped due to technical and economic backwardness.

Although Ethiopia is a country with abundant surface and underground water resources for irrigation and drinking, very little of this has been utilized. The overwhelming majority of the Ethiopian people depend on rain for their agriculture, making them highly vulnerable to drought and to the vagaries of nature. Of the estimated total irrigable area of land of 3 million hectares, only 100,000 hectares or about 3 per cent has been irrigated. Only a minority of the rural population, i.e. about 6.5 per cent, has access to clean drinking water.

The unique topographical features of the country, its rare wild life, its mild and pleasant climate throughout the year and the extraordinary historical relics could have been the basis for a thriving tourist industry. Unfortunately, the income earned from tourism is quite small due to the country's limited transportation network and paucity of hotel accommodation and other related tourist facilities.

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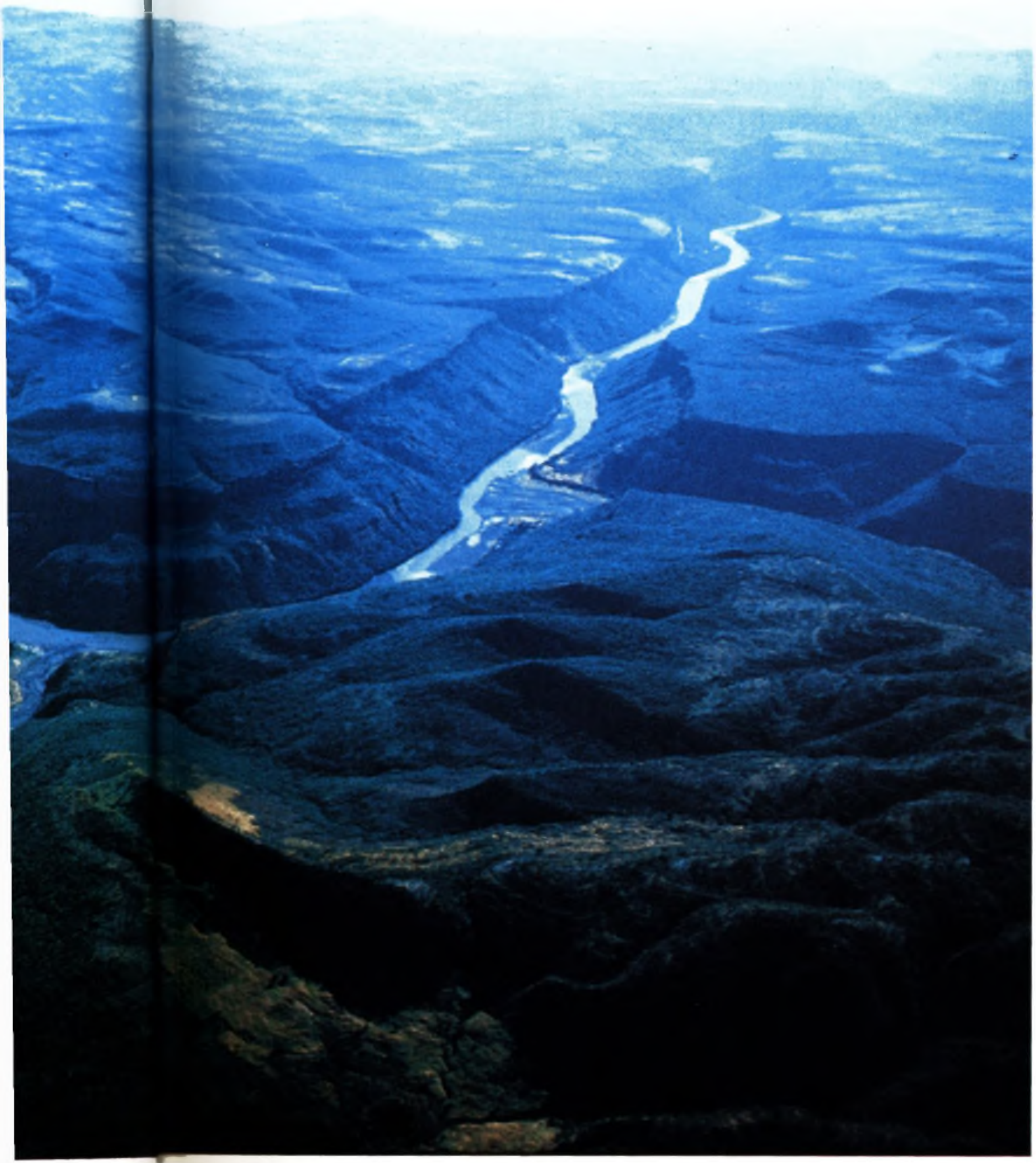

Ethiopia's rugged terrain, although startlingly beautiful, and with abundant surface water at many points, is itself a serious obstacle to development with its deeply-eroded mountainsides and remote valleys.

Characteristics of the Economy

As can be easily discerned from the previous paragraphs, very little of the existing natural resources of the country has been developed and utilized for the benefit of the people. The great majority of Ethiopians live in poverty. Ethiopia is classified by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) as one of the 31 least-developed countries among the developing countries of the world.

With an annual average per capita income of US$140.5 at current market prices in 1983/84; with an average annual GDP growth rate of 2.5 per cent; with a savings ratio to GDP of 3.2 per cent; with close to 50 per cent of GDP being contributed by agriculture; and with over 80 per cent of employment being provided by the agricultural sector, Ethiopia's economy can only be characterized as underdeveloped.

Manufacturing industry, including small-scale industry and handicrafts, contributes only 11 per cent to Gross Domestic Product. Furthermore, only about 3 per cent of total employment is provided by manufacturing industry. Manufacturing industry is largely dominated by light industry, producing consumer goods such as food, textiles, beverages, leather and shoes and other similar products. The country has, therefore, to depend on imports for the badly needed machinery and equipment, transportation equipment and engineering goods, durable consumer products and capital goods in general.

For many years the country's export items have changed little in terms of quantity, quality and variety. The main export items are still coffee beans, hides and skins, oilseeds and pulses, with 64 per cent of total export earnings being contributed by a single agricultural commodity, namely coffee.[2] On the whole, over 90 per cent of the export earnings of the country is contributed by agricultural commodities.[3] The country finds it very difficult to earn enough foreign exchange in a situation where world prices of agricultural commodities have been falling year after year while the prices of manufactures – machinery, transport equipment and capital goods – have generally been rising. Ethiopia's foreign exchange earning capacity is thus extremely vulnerable, especially in periods when devastating drought reduces agricultural output even more.

The scientific and technological development of the country is at a very low and rudimentary stage. Much remains to be done by way of improved methods of production, especially in the agricultural sector. Technological know-how in the industrial sector is imported and tends to be exorbitantly expensive.

With these very low levels of economic and technological development large sections of the population are susceptible to rampant and fatal diseases, malnutrition, large-scale unemployment and underemployment. The social and physical economic infrastructure is, to say the least, very poor. It is thus not difficult to understand the proneness and vulnerability of the country to a widespread natural calamity such as the drought of 1983/1984.

Recent Economic Situation: An Overview

Owing mainly to the recent severe drought, Ethiopia's economy has experienced a serious setback. This has entailed shortages of foreign exchange and basic consumer goods and services, price escalation, the worsening of the unemployment situation and fiscal problems. The worldwide economic recession of 1979/81 and more recently the severe drought which occurred in the country in 1984/85 have been the major causes of this unfavourable economic situation.

The Government has launched a Programme of Action to combat the effects of the drought. The Programme of Action comprises emergency, short-term and medium-term measures aimed at delivering immediate food and medical assistance to drought-affected persons as well as laying the groundwork for long-term solutions.[4] Furthermore, austerity measures, including steps to economize on fuel consumption and to use transport vehicles more economically, have been taken in response to the severe foreign exchange constraint currently prevailing.[5]

In 1982/83, following a good harvest, overall output increased by 5.1 per cent. Agriculture, which contributes close to 50 per cent of GDP, grew by 4.7 per cent, i.e. by substantially more than the rate of population growth. However, in 1983/84 the situation was completely reversed in the wake of the beginning of one of the most devastating droughts in the nation's history. In 1983/84 overall output declined by 2.3 per cent as against a planned growth rate of 4 per cent. Agricultural production slumped by 8.8 per cent.[6]

The effects of the current drought have been disastrous. Around 10 million people are affected, requiring 1.5 million metric tons of food. At present, thanks to generous assistance from the international com-

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Ethiopia's principal known natural resource is its rich and extensive agricultural land. However, agricultural production remains predominantly in the hands of individual peasants who cultivate small and fragmented plots with primitive tools and implements. Thus productivity of land and labour are low.

munity and the Government's determined relief efforts, millions of lives have been saved. But the situation is still critical. Food and other emergency relief assistance must continue until the situation improves. Further, the shortage of seeds, oxen and implements poses a serious problem even if the weather does improve. Above all, even more determined efforts have to be made to provide lasting solutions to the recurring problem of drought and famine. This requires the planning and implementation of long-term development programmes which in turn call for the mobilization of resources from both domestic and external sources.

The Government of Ethiopia is making a determined effort to change the economic scene of the country through the introduction of progressive development policies, through the preparation of the Ten-Year Perspective Plan, and through the launching of short-term as well as medium-term plans. The perspective plan and the short- and medium-term plans give top priority to agriculture so that the country will be self-sufficient in food with a sufficient agricultural surplus for the export market and for the domestic industries which are to a great extent based on agriculture. Despite the current disastrous drought, Socialist Ethiopia is doing its best to raise productivity, increase savings through fiscal means and austerity measures as well as through the encouragement of handicrafts and small-scale industries in order to raise the low level of investment.

Assessments indicate that the low level of investment in general is one of the causes for unemployment, especially in urban areas. That is why Ethiopia is giving special attention to the handicrafts and small-scale industries sector, because of its high labour content, local technology content and its ability to mobilize resources for productive purposes. The establishment of the Handicrafts and Small-Scale Industries Agency as an autonomous organization and the allocation and channelling of resources both internal and external to this Agency is a clear manifestation of the Government's determination to raise investment by mobilizing available local initiative and resources to alleviate the social and economic problems of unemployment.[7]

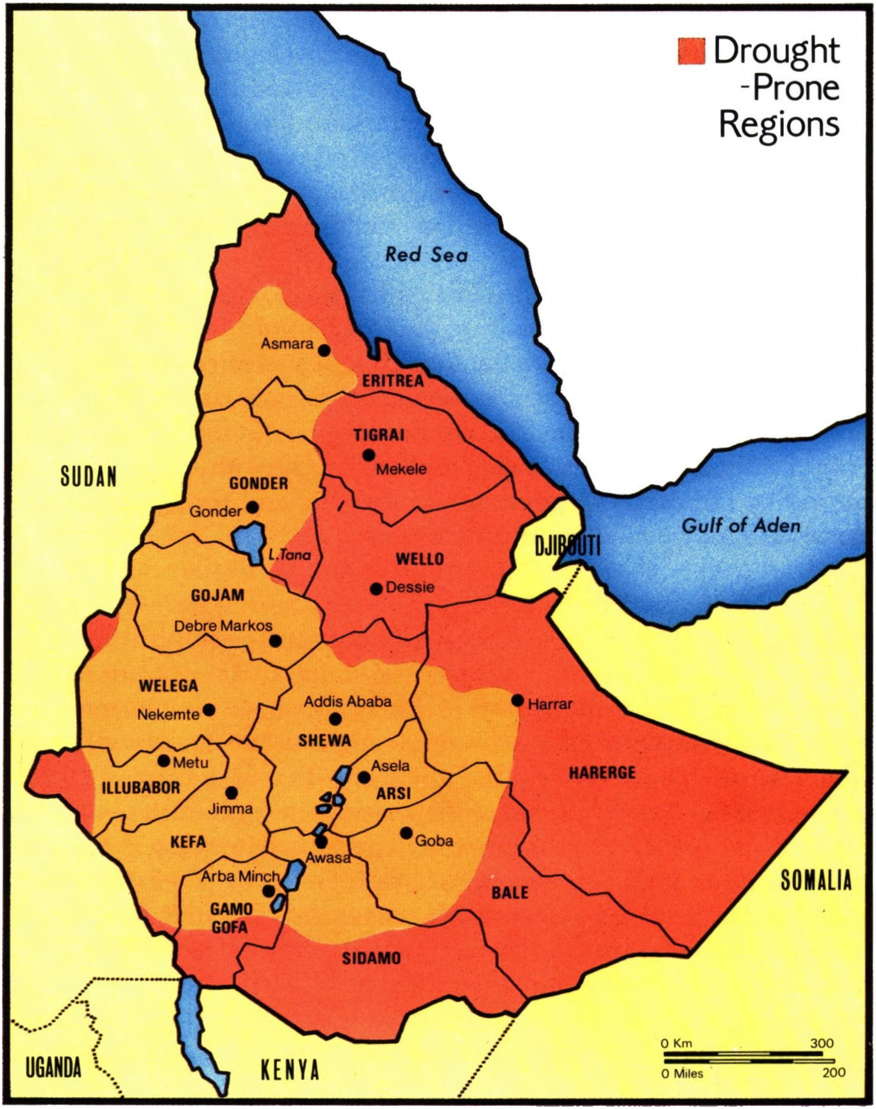
A developing country with a predominantly rain-fed peasant agriculture and affected by recurring, widespread and severe drought will have a low level of food grain production. Ethiopia, being in such a predicament, has to import food grain, fuel, machinery and equipment and other capital goods to prevent the development effort from being neglected and undermined. In such a situation, the country cannot have a favourable balance of payments. It is no wonder, therefore, that Ethiopia does indeed have a balance of payments problem. Despite this issue, the country is still doing its best to implement some of the important industrial development projects and most of the agricultural and water resource development programmes included in the short- and medium-term plans. In actual fact, the various resettlement and rehabilitation schemes and the water conservation programmes which are vigorously being implemented will supplement the development programmes drawn for the agricultural sector and may even result in the over-fulfilment of the targets set for this sector.

Export earnings from coffee, the country's most important foreign exchange earner, declined during the first half of 1984/85 due to the decline in production because of the drought and due to the fall of the price of coffee in the international market. Clearly, the foreign trade performance of the country cannot be favourable under such economic circumstances. Owing to the fall in agricultural production caused by the drought, government revenue and foreign exchange earnings have been adversely affected.

The 1983/84 drought

Although certain parts of Ethiopia have been affected by drought for something like 20 years as a result of the southward movement of the Sahara desert, the northern parts of the country have been barren for a much longer time due to ceaseless exploitation of the land by peasants who were unable to conserve the soil or the flora of the regions. Having been inhabited since time immemorial, the land in the northern parts of the country has become exhausted and devastated by the heavy concentration of people who have been trying to eke out a living there. These areas, as shown earlier, have also suffered from international and incessant internal wars with the result that accumulation of savings was substantially affected.

The drought and famine of 1972–74 which caused the deaths of some 200,000 people and large herds of animals in Wello region was considered at that time to be one of the worst in Ethiopia's long history. The 1983/84 drought, which has dragged on into 1985, must, however, be regarded as even more devastating because of its territorial magnitude. Whereas the 1972–74 drought affected only a few administrative regions, the current drought has encompassed no less than 12 of the country's 14 regions.



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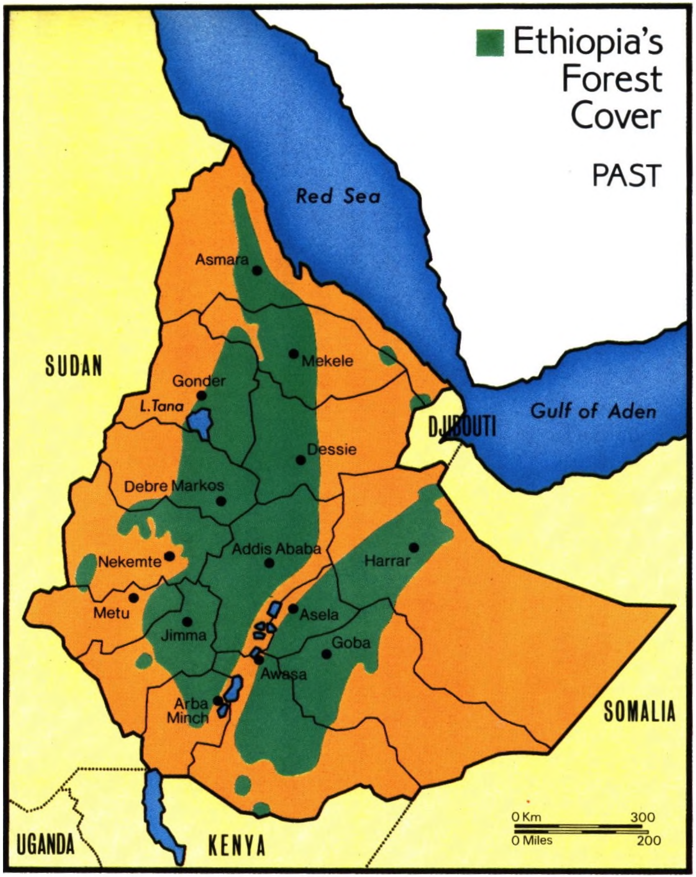
🟩 Ethiopia's Forest Cover
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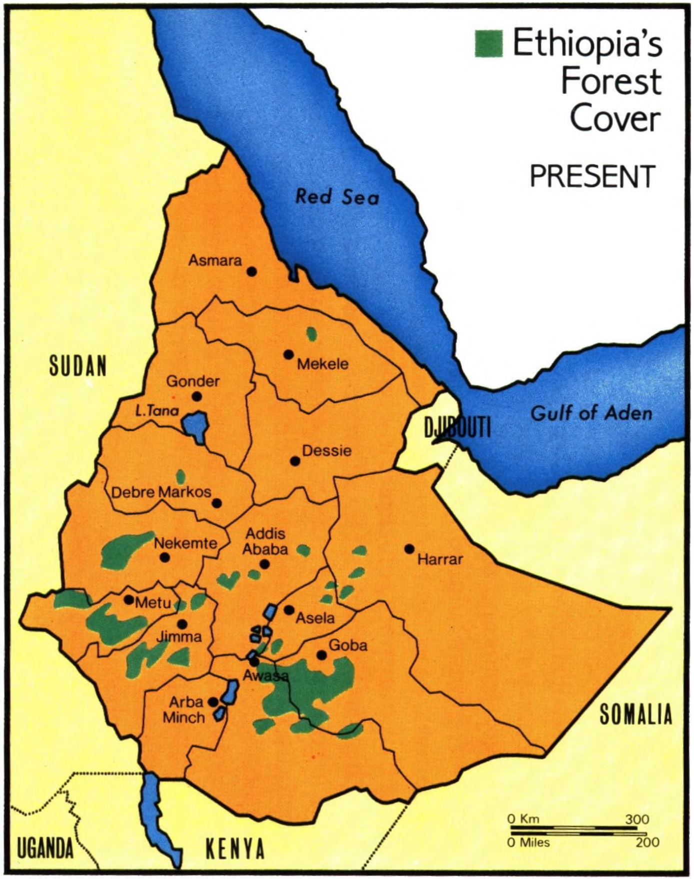
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In response to the disaster of 1972–74, the Government established the RRC and gave it emergency powers to deal with the wide range of problems associated with that calamity. The scale and difficulty of the problems caused by the current drought have, however, gone far beyond the means and resources of the country as a whole. Ethiopia's low level of agricultural and industrial development; the very rudimentary road and communications networks; the very small number of transport vehicles; the country's ill-equipped and badly staffed health facilities – all these aspects of underdevelopment, along with the country's small foreign-exchange earning capacity have prevented the nation from coping adequately with the enormous relief and rehabilitation tasks at hand. Nevertheless, within these severe constraints the Government of Socialist Ethiopia has taken bold and courageous steps. It has allocated a substantial volume of resources for the purchase of grain and medicines from abroad and for the resettlement and rehabilitation of the drought victims in fertile, virgin areas of the country where they can become self-sufficient and independent of foreign food assistance.

The scale of human suffering and the limited resources at the country's disposal have compelled the Government to appeal for international assistance. The promptness with which the non-governmental sections of the donor community responded is noteworthy; their assistance was spontaneous and very encouraging. But in order to combat the effects of the drought the Government also set up the National Committee for Relief and Rehabilitation which immediately drew up an action plan to rescue the situation by combining the energies of the people with the cooperation of the international community. The main objectives of the action programme are to:

- save millions of human lives through relief work,
- lay the groundwork for the long term solution of the problems of drought and the attendant suffering by means of the various resettlement and rehabilitation schemes, and
- restore the fertility of the soil and correct the imbalance of the ecological system in the drought-affected areas.

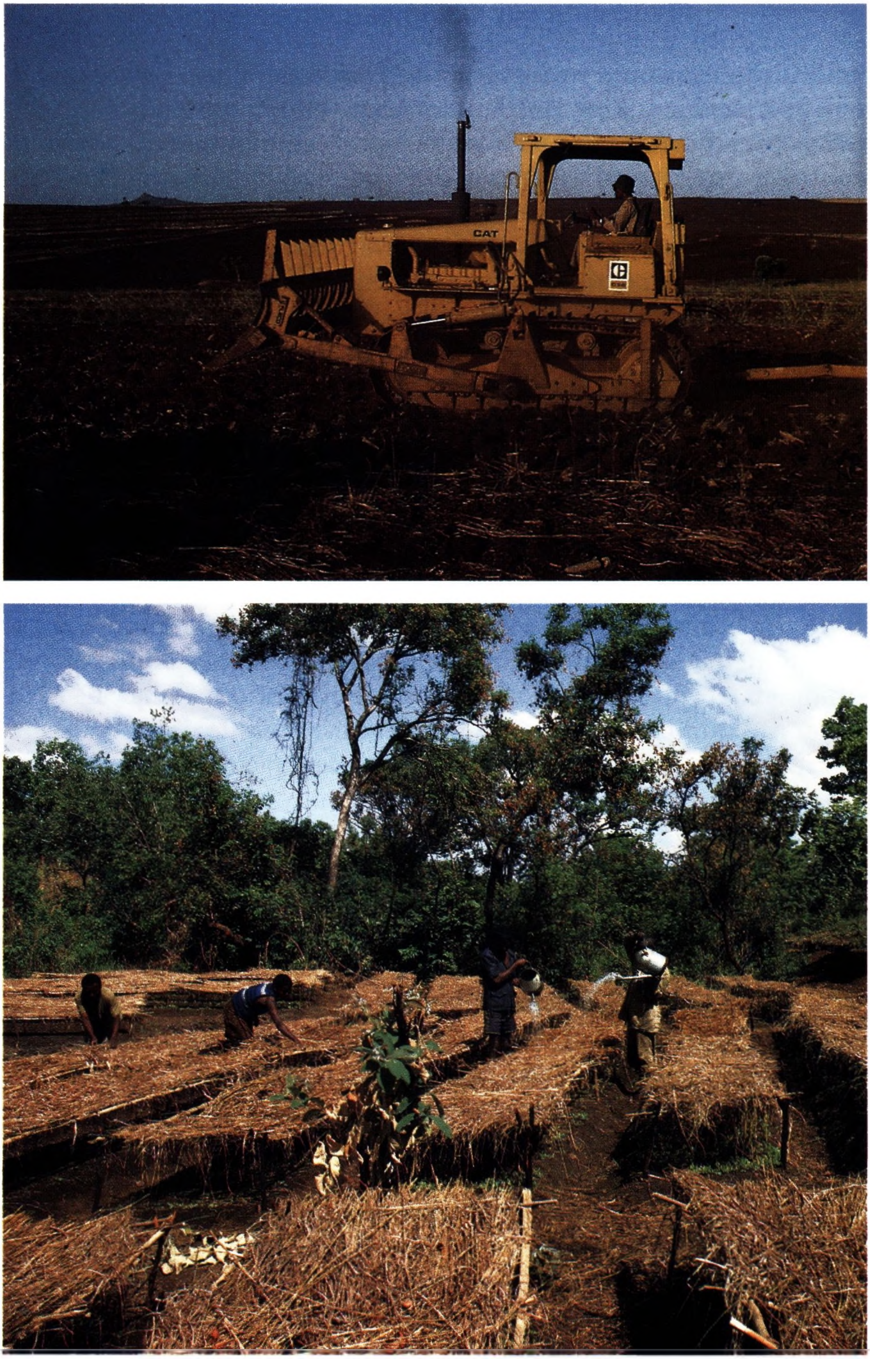
Developments since 1974

The popular revolution of February 1974, which abolished the feudal order, broke out spontaneously. The peasantry had suffered more than any other group under the yoke of the old system; in some regions the landlords had exacted as much as 75 per cent of their tenants' produce. Absentee landlordism was widespread. The new social order did away with tenancy and gave user rights to the peasants who were also allowed to farm up to 10 hectares of land each. Former commercial farms were taken over by the state and large-scale industrial, financial and trade institutions were brought under government ownership and control. The new regime adopted the socialist path as the most appropriate strategy to speed up the country's socio-economic development and to raise the people from poverty, disease and illiteracy.

Peasants were soon organized into peasant associations, agricultural service and producers' cooperatives. State farms were expanded and organized under regional corporations. Industry was restructured and workers mobilized into trade unions while townspeople set up urban dwellers' associations. Youth and women's associations were also founded. These were the principal ways in which the country's altered socio-economic system was consolidated.

Although it is true to say that the 1972-74 drought sparked off the Ethiopian Revolution, the underlying causes of the upheaval were more profound. Throughout the centuries of feudal rule there appeared to be no hope of escape from drudgery, ignorance and backwardness. Nor did the peasantry experience any let up in the merciless exploitation by the landlord class. Soil erosion, deforestation and ancient farming practices steadily impoverished the land with the result that food production lagged behind the rate of rural population growth, rendering even more precarious the peasants' subsistence. The stagnating agriculture had the effect of aborting the country's industrial development and other sectors of the economy by and large also failed to show any appreciable growth. It became clear to the more conscious groups in society that a national crisis was inevitable and that the suffering of the majority of the population was reaching unendurable proportions. The eventual outcome was clear: the dawning of a new era.

From the very outset the Revolution was confronted with a range of obstacles and problems which at times appeared to be insurmountable. Within the country there were pockets of reaction, while beyond the borders external aggessors found what they took to be an opportune moment to attack and realize long-cherished dreams of territorial aggrandisement. Destruction of infrastructure and property by Somalia's military forces, deliberate economic sabotage and



Ethiopia's economic plans give top priority to agriculture with a view to making the country self-sufficient in food.

Weaver at work in one of the many co-operatives that have emerged since 1974. The establishment and funding of the Handicrafts and Small-Scale Industries Agency is a clear manifestation of the Government's determination to boost employment by mobilising available local initiative and resources.

unfavourable world economic developments, especially the enormous increase in the price of oil, combined to throw Ethiopia's economy out of kilter. Shortages of basic consumer goods and services became acute. Output stagnated and then declined and inflation rocketed. Inspired by the leadership of the new Government, however, the people managed to resist and then to crush the foreign invaders and to weed out the reactionary elements within the country. In 1978, that is, after the defeat of Somalia's invading forces, the military and political scene calmed down considerably and the Government was able to focus more attention on the economic problems facing the country.

Development Campaign Programmes

In October 1978 an important planning organization, namely the National Revolutionary Development Campaign Central Planning Supreme Council, was established with the Head of State as its Chairman. The planning organization, now reorganized into the Office of the National Committee for Central Planning, was given full powers to guide and oversee the running of the national economy and plan the future socio-economic development of the nation.

Pursuant to its mandate, the planning organ launched a series of annual development campaigns, six in all, immediately after its inception. The primary objectives of the annual development campaign programmes were to rebuild the war-damaged national economy, to increase the production of basic consumer goods and services and improve their distribution, to alleviate the acute shortage of foreign exchange, to ameliorate major economic and social problems such as unemployment and prostitution and, last but by no means least, to lay down some of the requisite social and economic infrastructure for the building of a socialist economy.[8]

Although setbacks were encountered, the development campaign programmes have gone a long way towards the attainment of the objectives set for them. GDP, which grew by an average of only 0.7 per cent per annum between 1973/74 and 1977/78, increased by an annual average of 3.9 per cent between 1978/79 and 1982/83. During this latter period agriculture grew by 2.5 per cent and industry by 6.3 per cent per annum. As would be expected, the situation in 1983/84 was extremely adverse as overall output showed a decline of 2.3 per cent in the wake of the unfolding of the disastrous drought.[9] The worldwide economic recession of 1979–81 also had a dampening effect on the growth of output which had been quite robust during the first two years of the development campaign period.

The rate of investment, which had declined to an average of 8.8 per cent during 1973/74–1977/78, recovered to 10.5 per cent during the development campaign period.[10] Several investment projects such as the Muger cement factory, the Kombolcha textiles factory, the Bahar Dar edible oil factory, the Nazareth tractor assembly plant, the Agarfa multi-purpose farmers' school, etc., were implemented. Rural road construction progressed at an accelerated pace during the period, increasing the length of roads built nearly threefold, compared to the situation prior to the campaign period.

In the education sector, spectacular achievements were registered following the success of the nationwide literacy campaign which was launched in late 1978. Close to 11 million people have been made literate to date and Ethiopia was the winner of the 1980 UNESCO award for literacy in recognition of this impressive literacy drive.

The development campaign programmes have also alleviated the shortage of basic consumer goods and services which had become severe in the years prior to the economic drive. Some progress had also been made in mitigating unemployment and social problems. Further, the campaign programmes have provided valuable experience in the preparation and implementation of economic plans on a national scale. Achievements in the area of institution building have also been considerable.

However, it was in due course realized that valuable as the annual campaign programmes have been, their objectives fell short of fully satisfying the long-term development needs of the country which must be addressed if the root causes of economic backwardness are to be tackled. The annual campaign programmes proved effective in mitigating urgent economic and social problems, but it was beyond their scope to effect a structural transformation of the national economy which, of necessity, is a long-term process entailing, among other things, the mobilization of domestic and external resources on a large scale for the implementation of an integrated long-term development programme.

It was in response to this long-term development challenge that the Ten-Year Perspective Plan (1984/85–1993/94) was elaborated and launched in 1984/85. The Perspective Plan is to be implemented through three sub-plans with time-spans of two, three and five years.

Clearing virgin land preparatory to ploughing at one of the resettlement sites established for victims of the 1984 drought. It is hoped that friendly countries will respond to Ethiopia's need for assistance in long-term development projects such as these with as much concern and sympathy as they showed responding to the immediate emergency.

Development projects aimed at increasing the area of irrigated land are a national priority. It is estimated that Ethiopia has some 3 million hectares of irrigable land. At present, however, only 100,000 hectares are irrigated and the overwhelming majority of the Ethiopian people depend on rain for their agriculture, making them highly vulnerable to drought and to the vagaries of nature.

The first two-year plan covering the period 1984/85–1985/86 is already being partly implemented.

The major objectives of the Perspective Plan are to increase the productive capacity of the economy, to raise the standard of living of the population, to build a strong and less dependent national economy, to develop the hitherto unexploited natural resources of the country, to promote socialist production relations, to upgrade the educational and professional standards of the people, to foster the development of science and technology and gradually to eliminate unemployment. Appropriate strategies to realize these objectives have also been formulated.[11]

The Perspective Plan envisages an average GDP growth rate of 6.5 per cent per annum. Agriculture is planned to grow at an average of 4.3 per cent yearly and industry at 10.8 per cent. Services are estimated to increase at the same rate as overall output. The long-term plan envisions a total investment expenditure of Birr 41.8 billion at current prices (or Birr 32 billion at constant prices) of which Birr 23.2 billion or 55.5 per cent is to be generated from domestic sources and the remaining Birr 18.6 billion or 44.5 per cent is expected to come from external sources.[12]

The international community has responded to the 1984/85 drought with great compassion and generosity and up to April 1985 emergency relief and other assistance from abroad has been truly heartening. Even though this amount is pitifully inadequate in relation to the dimensions of the human tragedy caused by the drought, the spirit of international cooperation has been truly exemplary. The emergency assistance has undoubtedly relieved the suffering of millions, but the root causes of famine have still to be confronted.

These problems cannot be tackled unless long-term anti-drought development programmes in the fields of soil conservation, reafforestation, irrigation, improved farming techniques, etc., are formulated and implemented. The international community can play a great role in providing a part of the resources necessary for the execution of such long-term development plans of the country. The Ten-Year Perspective Plan provides a useful framework for such international development cooperation. It is hoped that friendly countries, wherever they may be, will respond to Ethiopia's long-term efforts with the same concern and sympathy that they have shown to the current human tragedy that has befallen the nation. The only way to avoid such tragedies in the future is to begin to strike at the root causes today.

CHAPTER 2

DROUGHT AND FAMINE IN ETHIOPIA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

DROUGHT and famine in Ethiopia date back almost to the beginning of the country's history. Early records are scarce, but by the medieval period there are a number of references to such events which, then as later, were often followed by the outbreak of epidemic diseases, for the most part of smallpox, cholera or influenza.

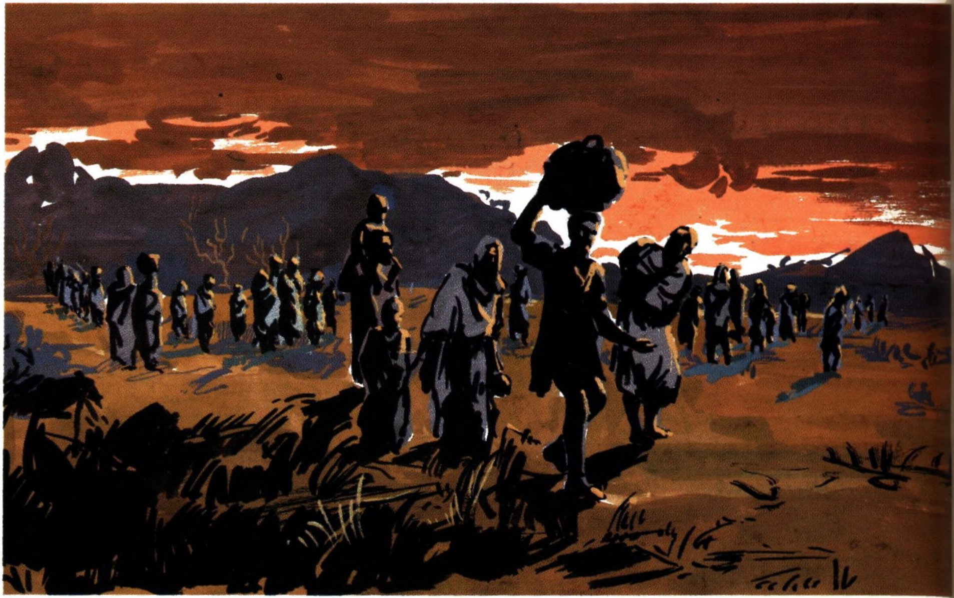
The earliest known evidence of this is to be found in a medieval Ethiopian work, the *Metshafe Senkesar*, or synaxarium, which like other books of that period throughout the world, is written in a religious rather than scientific vein. The text is nonetheless important for it provides documentation on several of the first known such disasters in Ethiopian history. The synaxarium thus reveals that a famine occurred in the ninth century when, supposedly because of the wickedness of the people, God prevented the heavens from sending forth rain, with the result, it was reported, that 'all our men are dying of the plague.'[1] Later again, in the 12th century, there is reference in the synaxarium to a curse falling upon the country, as a result of which 'famine and plague broke out in the land, and the rain would not fall on the fields, and great tribulation came upon the people.'[2]

The synaxarium, as a medieval religious work, invariably attributes famines and other disasters to the wrath of God, and therefore unfortunately fails to identify their real cause.

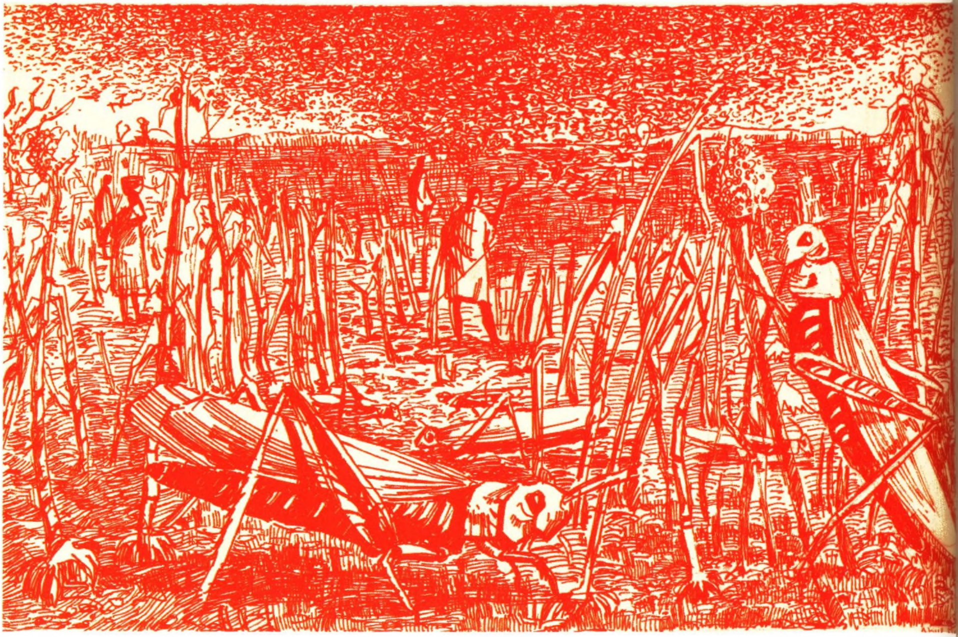
Later medieval texts record the outbreak of many other droughts, famines and epidemics.[3] One of the worst of these calamities was a 'cruel famine' said to have occurred during the reign of Amde Tseyon (1314-1344), the exact cause of which is not, however, identified.[4]

Most famines in Ethiopia's long history would appear to have been due to drought, but others were the result of epidemics which killed the country's cattle and draught-oxen, or of locusts or caterpillars which consumed the crops. Locust invasions were particularly serious in the past. A graphic account of one such invasion was penned by the Portuguese traveller Francisco Alvares, who, recalling his residence in Ethiopia from 1520 to 1526, observes:

> In these parts (Tigrai) and in all the dominions of the Prester John there is a very great plague of locusts which destroy the fresh crops (and trees) on a



'.... the people were going away from this country and we found roads full of men, women and children on foot, and some in their arms, with their little bundles on their heads....'



'In these parts.... there is a very great plague of locusts.... Their multitude, which covers the earth and fills the air, is not to be believed; they darken the light of the sun....'

> very big scale. Their multitude, which covers the earth and fills the air, is not to be believed, they darken the light of the sun. I say again that it is not a thing to be believed by anyone who has not seen them . . . (whenever) they come the earth is left as though it had been set on fire.[5]

The author also reports that 'many times we heard (the people) say, such a kingdom, such a country, is destroyed by the *Ambata*', i.e. locusts.

Such accounts, vivid as they are, fail to provide statistical data on the number of people and livestock that perished through the ages. Though several of the early sources mention the provinces affected by famines and plagues, they have little to say about the exact demographic consequences of these disasters. One effect which is documented is, however, the movement of population away from the worst affected areas. Alvares, describing an area overrun by locusts, thus reports:

> . . . the people were going away from this country, and we found the roads full of men, women and children, on foot, and some in their arms, with their little bundles on their heads, removing to a country where they might find provisions (it was a pitiful thing to see them).[6]

Though the precise causation of the famines of the past is not always recorded, drought is known to have been responsible for those from which the country suffered during the reigns of Lebna Dengel (1508-40) and Gelawdewos (1540-69), as well as those of 1752 and 1772-3. There are similarly records of famines due to locust invasions taking place during the reigns of Lebna Dengel (1508-40) and Fasiladas (1632-67), and again in 1747 and 1822.

Many of the famines of the past were accompanied, or more often followed, by major epidemics. The earliest of these epidemics are not always possible to identify, though those of later times can most often be diagnosed as smallpox, cholera or influenza.[7]

The first of many unidentified epidemics were those which coincided with the already-mentioned ninth and 12th century famines referred to in the synaxarium. During the earlier of these two outbreaks a contemporary is said to have declared, 'All our men are dying of the plague.'[8]

There is mention in later medieval literature of numerous other epidemics, notably one in 1272-3 which seriously affected the Harrar area, as well as others during the reigns of Amda Tseyon (1314-44) when 'many people died', and Safya Ared (1344-72) when a pestilence is said to have 'mowed down the whole of Ethiopia.' A century or so later there was another major plague in which an emperor is reported to have died. This epidemic reached the attention of the Arab writer Maqrizi who states that, around 1435-6, there was an outbreak which 'ranged far and wide and destroyed the inhabitants of Abyssinia. The Hatsi (i.e. Emperor) fell to it, and so many that the whole country is said to be depopulated by it.'[9] Later texts tell a similar tale. During the 16th century and first decades of the 17th there is record for example of no less than nine major epidemics as well as six famines. One of these outbreaks of disease, that of 1611, was so serious that people spoke of it as *manan tita*, which significantly enough, means, 'who did it leave?', i.e. 'who survived?'[10]

Another outbreak was that of 1634-5, which was called *fangel*, literally 'the Liquidator.'[11] This epidemic was interesting in that it was the first which can be identified with certainty – it was, in fact, the appearance in Ethiopia of the great world-wide cholera epidemic of that time.[12]

The Great Famine of 1888-1892

The great Ethiopian famine of 1888-1892 which has been studied by Dr. Richard Pankhurst[13] is perhaps the country's most fully documented natural calamity of former times. It began, as Pankhurst has shown, with an outbreak of rinderpest which 'may well have been due to the importation by the Italians of infected cattle from abroad.' The cattle disease soon 'spread like wildfire.'[14] Within a short time it had advanced from the port of Massawa to Gojam and Shewa and soon went as far south as Welega and Harrar. Pankhurst, quoting various sources, estimates that over 90 per cent of the cattle died.[15] Afework Gebre Yesus, in his biography of Menilek II, laconically states that: «የከብት፡ እልቂት፡ መጣና፡ ዶፍን፡ አገሩ፡ ባዶ፡ እጁን፡ ቀረ፡» ('the cattle plague came and the whole country remained empty-handed'). He also wrote that 'a nomad who had possessed a thousand cows and oxen would be left with not more than one or two.'[16]

Our sources are unanimous about the consequences of this cattle plague. Owing to the shortage of oxen the land could not be cultivated; this in turn led to shortages of food and then famine.[17] To make this situation worse, the years 1888-1890 were also years of drought. As a result harvest failures set in. Pankhurst writes that 'the influx of locusts and caterpillars seem to have occurred at about the same time as the other calamities.'[18] Flad, a contemporary observer, recalls that caterpillars 'appeared in such masses that they destroyed the crops and what was left over was annihilated by swarms of locusts.'[19] It was scarcely surprising that the prices of essential goods soared, as indicated in the following table based on data collected by the Russian traveller Mashcov:

TABLE 1
Price Increases during the Outbreak of the Great Famine

	1889 Price in M.T. Dollars*	Quantity	1890 Price in M.T. Dollars	Quantity
Wheat	1	200 qunna	1	1.5 qunna
Barley	1	400 qunna	1	2–3 qunna
Plough oxen	2–4	1 head	60–80	1 head
Cattle	1–1.5	1 head	30–60	1 head

* *Maria Theresa Dollar – a silver currency imported from Europe and then in widespread use in Ethiopia.*
One qunna is equivalent to 5 kgs.
Source: Pankhurst, 'The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888–1892', pp.109–10.

This vast price increase is confirmed by many observers. Grain and cattle were no longer accessible to the average peasant whose entire monetary wealth would seldom exceed more than a few Maria Theresa dollars.

The result, as may easily be imagined, was a famine of devastating proportions which led to the emergence all over the country of various 'unnatural practices', including the eating of traditionally forbidden foods, the abandonment or sale of children by their parents, self-enslavement, murder, suicide – and even cannibalism. Afework Gebre Yesus gives a short but vivid description of the situation at this time:

> The people were dying of starvation along the paths in the fields, in churchyards and in the compounds of the nobility. The time was a time of festivity for hyenas and vultures and of misery for human beings. Far from people showing sympathy for each other, a mother no longer wept for her child nor did a child for his mother. Burial of the dead became a rare (phenomenon). At that time, to be buried was reserved for the fortunate ones. The rest were 'buried' in the stomachs of hyenas and vultures. In a (fertile) country like Ethiopia, there was no cow in the fields, no calf in the stables and no farm in the country.[20]

Menilek's chronicler, Gebre Selassie, describing those days, said:

> People came from the four corners (of the country) and the poor and the miserable filled the town of Entoto. A huge hall was constructed on the

ሰው፡ ሁሉ፡ በራብ፡ እያለቀ፡ በየመንገዱ፡ በየዱሩ፡ በየቤተ፡ ክርስቲያኑ፡ በየመኳንንቱ፡ ቅጥር፡ ዙሪያ፡ ይወድቅ፡ ይዘረር ጀመረ። ጊዜው፡ የጅብና፡ ያሞራ፡ ደስታ፡ የሰው፡ ኃዘን፡ ሆነ፤ እንኳን፡ አንዱ፡ ለአንዱ፡ ሊተዛዘን፡ እንኳን፡ ዘመድ፡ ለወዳጅ፡ እግዚር፡ ያጽናህ፡ ሊባባል፡ እናት፡ ለልጅ፤ ልጅ፡ ለናቱ፡ ማልቀስ፡ መላቀስ፡ ቀረ። ለሞተው፡ ሰው፡ መቃብር፡ ጊጥ፡ ሆነበት፤ የዚያን፡ ጊዜ፡ መቃብር፡ የሚቆፈርላቸው፡ እምብዛም፡ ለታደሉቱ፡ ነበር። ለቀረው፡ ሁሉ፡ ግን፡ መቃብሩ፡ ያሞራና፡ የጅብ ሆድ፡ ሆነ። ኢትዮጵያን፡ የመሰለ፡ አገር፡ የዚያ፡ ጊዜ፡ ተመስክ፡ አንድ፡ ላም፡ ውሉ፡ አይልበት፡ ተበረቱ፡ እምቦሳ፡ አይጮህበት፡ ተገጠሩ፡ እርሻ፡ አይታይበት • • •/ሆነ/

The people were dying of starvation along the paths in the fields, in churchyards and in the compounds of the nobility. The time was a time of festivity for the hyenas and vultures and of misery for human beings. Far from people showing sympathy for each other, a mother no longer wept for her child nor did a child for his mother. Burial of the dead became a rare (phenomenon). At that time, to be buried was reserved for the fortunate ones. The rest were 'buried' in the stomachs of hyenas and vultures. In a (fertile) country like Ethiopia, there was no cow in the fields, no calf in the stables and no farm in the country.

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One woman was brought (to Menilek) from Ensaro on charges of eating several children. The Emperor asked her whether it was true that she ate human flesh. She said, ‘Yes, Your Majesty, I ate seven children when I was extremely hungry.’ The Emperor asked again, ‘Where did you catch them and how did you kill them?’ She replied, ‘I strangled them when they were playing.’ But the woman did not look like a person who had eaten anything, let alone seven children. Her (bare) belly looked like the dewlap of a starved cow. Her eyes were swollen and she appeared pale. She gave the impression of a person about to fall . . . (Menilek) said, ‘What can one do? It is the times.’ He ordered clothes and food for her and handed her over to an officer.

> right side of the Church of St. Mary. The poor were brought into it . . . Then the servants gave out crumbled *injera* mixed with stew. (In spite of this), however . . . the number of dying outweighed that of the survivors.[21]

Gebre Selassie also provides valuable evidence as to the extent of social disintegration which the famine produced. He notes that cannibalism, a practice of course entirely alien to Ethiopian civilization, was actually reported in several parts of the country. In Wello, a mother ate her child. In Ensaro, a locality in Shewa, a woman is said to have eaten seven children.

The story of the woman who ate seven children is also repeated by Afework whose account of this wretched woman is most pathetic:

> One woman was brought (to Menilek) from Ensaro on charges of eating several children. The Emperor asked her whether it was true that she ate human flesh. She said, 'Yes, Your Majesty, I ate seven children when I was extremely hungry.' The Emperor asked again, 'Where did you catch them and how did you kill them?' She replied, 'I strangled them when they were playing.' But the woman did not look like a person who had eaten anything, let alone seven children. Her (bare) belly looked like the dewlap of a starved cow. Her eyes were swollen and she appeared pale. She gave the impression of a person about to fall . . .(Menilek) said, 'What can one do? It is the times.' He ordered clothes and food for her and handed her over to an officer.[22]

This incident gives an insight into the severity of the famine. The people were literally mowed down by hunger. On the other hand, it was a time of feasting for wild animals and vultures, according to Gebre Selassie. Despite having so much dead flesh, both animal and human, to eat, the hyenas even started attacking people before they had actually died. Human beings were so enfeebled that they could not defend themselves from the hyenas, the proverbially cowardly animal, let alone from leopards and lions which roamed the towns and villages in broad daylight. According to Abba Jerome and Wayzero Sangal from Tigrai:

> . . . it was common for people to hear the cry of *wasadagn* ('it is taking me away') uttered by famine-weathered victims, often old men and women, as the hyenas carried them off. Alaka Lemma, who was in Addis Ababa at this time, said that five or six times each night one would be wakened up by the Amharic cry of *wasadagn, wasadagn, wasadagn*, uttered by people carried off by hyenas.[23]

There are many horrifying and appalling descriptions of starving

· · · አገር፡ የሚያጠፋ፡ ሃይማኖት፡ የሚለውጥ፡ ጠላት፡ እግዚአብሔር፡ የወሰነልንን፡ ባሕር፡ አልፎ፡ መጥቷል። እኔም፡ ያገሬን፡ ከብት፡ ማለቅ፡ የሰዉን፡ መድከም፡ አይቼ፡ እስካሁን፡ ዝም፡ ብለው፡ ዳግሞ፡ እያለፈ፡ እንደ፡ ፍልፈል፡ መሬት፡ ይቆፍር፡ ጀመር። አሁን፡ ግን፡ በእግዚአብሔር፡ ረዳትነት፡ አገሬን፡ አሳልፌ፡ አልሰጠውም።

An enemy who would destroy (our) country and change (our) religion has come crossing the sea which was made by the Lord as our boundary. And when I kept quiet because of the decimation of the cattle and the exhaustion of the people (as a result of the drought), he went on burrowing inch by inch (into my country) like a mole. But now with the help of God, I will not hand over my country to him.

. . . ያራቱ፡ማዕዘን፡ሰው፣ እየመጣ፣ ድሃውና፡ ችግረኛው፡እንጦጦ፡በከተማው፡መላ። እንጦጦ፡ በደብረ፡ማርያም፡በስተቀኝ፡ትልቅ፡ሰቀላ፡ተሠራ። በዚያውም፡በሰቀላው፡ውስጥ፡ለድሃው፡መሉውን፡ሥፍራ፡ሰጡት። . . . በዚህም፡ጊዜ፡እንጀራ፡ እየተፈተፈተ፡በመሶብ፡በመሶብ፡እየሆነ፡ባቄላው፡ አተሩ፡ስንዴው፡በታላቅ፡ብረት፡ድስት፡እየተነፈረ፡ በንቅብ፡በንቅብ፡እየሆነ፡የንጉሡና፡የእቴጌ፡አዛዦች፡እያስያዙ፡እየሄዱ፡በልክ፡በልኩ፡ድርጎ፡ይሰጡ፡ነበር። ነገር፡ግን . . . ከሚተርፈው፡የሚሞተው፡ይበልጣል።

. . . People came from the four corners (of the country) and the poor and the miserable filled the town of Entoto. A huge hall was constructed on the right side of the Church of St. Mary. The poor were brought into it. . . Then the servants gave out crumbled *injera* mixed with stew. (In spite of this), however. . . the number of dying outweighed that of the survivors.

people by foreigners who were in the country at the time. It is, however, more difficult to arrive at the total number of people who died. All the available figures are individual estimates, and none of their authors had carried out a survey of the whole country or even made a careful count of the deaths in specific regions. Impossible though it is with the available sources to produce a reliable estimate for the whole country, Professor Pankhurst gives some indications based on contemporary eye-witness reports:

> Martial de Salviac, a Roman Catholic missionary, writing of the Galla south *[sic]*, declared that almost everywhere two-thirds of the population perished, while Wurtz, a French physician, observed: 'The Galla country which surrounds Shoa was completely depopulated and is so still'. I have been ten days journey to the west of Addis Ababa, halfway to the Abyssinian frontier, and have passed whole days without seeing a habitation. I was shown the sites of considerable villages where nothing remained but thickets and grass.
>
> Hugh Le Roux, a French traveller, reporting on a visit to Lake Zway, estimated that the population of the islands had fallen from 15,000 to 4,000, while the missionary Taurin de Castagne reported in 1892 that 'the country of the Itu Galla where we have a station has lost perhaps eight-tenths of its population.'[24]

Another result of this, in common with other famines, was the disruption of the traditional way of life, the break-up of families, the consequent damage to the mental stability of the survivors and the inevitable dislocations as people drifted in various directions in search of food. This again is something which has not been extensively documented – though there are some indications in the literature of the period[25] – and is difficult to quantify. Nevertheless, the disruption that such a great famine entailed must have been enormous.

The famine led to significant migration. There is abundant evidence that many people from Gojam crossed the Abbay, or Blue Nile, and settled in Welega while others moved even as far south as Kefa.[26] There was also some movement to Harrar, while thousands of famine victims trekked from the Tigrean highlands to Keren and the Red Sea coast. Many also joined Menilek's army. But to what extent precisely these internal migrations affected the demographic balance, ethnic composition, culture and language of the receiving areas is not recorded.

The famine also had major political considerations. It was partly because of this natural calamity that Ethiopia was unable to resist the

Italian advance into the northern highlands of what was to become Eritrea in 1890. The famine was also one of the reasons why Menilek refrained from mobilizing against Italy until 1895. This was clearly stated in the mobilization order he issued for the Adwa war in which he declared:

> An enemy who would destroy (our) country and change (our) religion has come crossing the sea which was made by the Lord as our boundary. And when I kept quiet because of the decimation of the cattle and the exhaustion of the people (as a result of the drought), he went on burrowing inch by inch (into my country) like a mole. But now with the help of God, I will not hand over my country to him.[27]

The Great Famine of 1888-92 was the last famine of the 19th century. The 20th century was characterised until the early 1970s by the steady evolution of the feudal structure of society into what can be called a feudo-bourgeois system. It is therefore appropriate to discuss the famines of the 20th century in a separate section. After all, the famine of 1972-74 was one of the immediate causes of the Revolution that took place in 1974.

Feudalism and Famine

In our discussion so far the factors directly responsible for the outbreak of the famine have been identified as drought, rinderpest and plagues of locusts and caterpillars. Such natural calamities were regarded in the old days as manifestations of God's wrath meted out upon His sinful people. To cite but one of many examples, a major famine of the time of Emperor Gelawdewos (1540-59) was referred to by the latter's chronicler as 'a punishment sent on the country by the Glorious God.'[28] That people should have thought in those terms is understandable, for explanations of natural phenomena were dominated by religious thinking and theological concepts. It therefore comes as no surprise to find that whenever a famine broke out the people were enjoined by their rulers to pray for divine intervention rather than to take practical steps. Menilek, for instance, decreed that: «. . . በየአድባራቱ፡ እየተሰበሰብክ፡ እግዚኦ፡ በሉ፡» ('The people should go to the churches and implore God for his help').[29] It is a truism that famines are caused by phenomena that have nothing to do with religion. Nor is it the case that drought and pestilence necessarily lead to famine. Even when crops have been blighted by locusts and the fields lie destroyed in the sun, starvation is by no means an inevitable consequence. What matters is whether food stocks from previous harvests have been stored away, whether the economy up to that point in time has produced enough to tide the people over until they can become productive once again.

Major causes of famine are to be found in the country's socio-economic system and in the productivity of the peasant farmers. Agricultural productivity is of course greatly influenced by the level of technical development. Technical improvement was, however, precisely what was lacking in the past. The artisans as a class of people were despised and not allowed to own land. Discrimination against them was one of the hallmarks of society. Their manual skills, far from being valued, were regarded as proof of their inferiority. Marriage between them and members of other social strata was therefore discouraged. The condescending attitude of the upper classes had the effect of minimizing the benefits which the artisans drew from their crafts until the point was reached where there was no incentive whatever to seek new techniques or introduce better methods of production. The conditions for technological innovation simply did not exist.

It is true that from the 16th century onwards successive kings sent emissaries to Europe in search of skilled craftsmen.[30] Their hope was that an infusion of foreign expertise would raise the level of Ethiopian craftsmanship. Yet their desire to improve local standards did not extend to encouraging their own artisans to catch up with foreign technology. This is one of the profound contradictions of our history. The monarchs of yesteryear preferred to depend on outsiders rather than acknowledge the worth of their own compatriots.

The nobility was, by and large, supported by the *gult* system. A typical feature of the *gult* system is that the lord did not have direct access to the land; the land was not his but his peasants'. His rights were only over the *produce*. He was entitled to collect tribute only in the form of agricultural produce. But since the crops were regarded by all concerned as his due, there was no reason for him to show any interest in the land as such. Whether the peasants beholden to him were as productive as they might be; whether their understanding of soil and seeds was all that could be desired, was a matter of indifference to him. He would get in touch with 'his' peasants, i.e. the peasants of his *gult*, only when the time came for him to collect his tribute or when their labour could serve him in some other way. It is these social relations that explain the abject ignorance by Ethiopia's pre-revolutionary ruling classes of the dynamics of food production. The nobles' very status as masters of men kept them out of touch with reality. Their supercilious attitude thus made them sneer even at the sources of food upon which they ultimately depended. Their aristocratic hauteur was later to bring them crashing down when the land could no longer afford their illusions.

The landlords used to collect a considerable volume of tribute in kind. Instead of being used judiciously, however; instead of some of it finding its way back to the farmers as incentives to produce more, this tribute was:

> . . . used up in feeding their soldiery . . . very little of the income (in kind of course) of the warlords reached the market to be sold or exchanged. In other words, the household of the landlords was so large and the number of religious men, especially within each church and monastery of the Orthodox Church, so high that almost everything collected by way of grain, cattle, sheep, goats, chickens and coarse cloths was consumed.[31]

One common tradition of the ruling class, from the King of Kings down to the local gentry, was the throwing of lavish parties (called *gibir*) on every conceivable occasion. Gebre Selassie, the chronicler of Menilek, gives a detailed account of a *gibir* thrown by Taitu, Menilek's consort. He reports that no less than 5,395 head of cattle were slaughtered along with a large number of sheep. Huge volumes of honey, butter, herbs and spices went into the preparation of drinks and delicacies. This opulent feast took place in 1886, three years before the Great Famine of 1889-1892 when large numbers of people died for want of anything to eat. Since *gibirs* were held very frequently, and drew their supplies of food from the state and feudal granaries, it is not surprising that stocks were low or non-existent when drought or pestilence stopped all agricultural production. Famine logically ensued.

The productivity of Ethiopia's peasant farmer has hitherto not been subjected to rigorous scrutiny and it would therefore be difficult to talk with authority about the quantities involved. Relevant statistics are conspicuously absent. Yet there is no doubt that in an analysis of the causes of famine, the question of agricultural productivity is just as important as the socio-economic context. Productivity is tied up with, and in a sense an expression of, the level of technology employed. The smaller the amount of food produced by particular tools and methods used, the smaller reserves there will be to fall back on in times of drought and the more likely it is that people will starve.

One of the most direct constraints on the productivity of Ethiopia's peasant farmers – the constraint that is in fact closest to the soil – is the weak metal-tipped plough so widely used throughout the country. This simple implement is nowhere near cost-effective, either in terms of the energy expended by the farmers or in relation to their agricultural objectives. As Mesfin Wolde Mariam notes, it only '. . . breaks the soil to a depth of about 10 to 15 cms.'[32] Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that the traditional plough is one of the key factors in the country's technical backwardness.

Nor has there been much terracing of the hillsides in the northern provinces of Ethiopia. The result is that, over the years, increasing amounts of topsoil have been carried away down the slopes. This ceaseless erosion of agriculture's foundation has already gone so far in parts of the north that vast tracts are now utterly ruined. Their productive powers have been exhausted beyond repair; it seems as if nothing will grow there again. Such sights are stark reminders of the ecological disaster that threatens the rest of the country, too, if counter-measures are not taken in time.

In addition to the great feasts of the ruling classes and the poor technology with which the Ethiopian peasant had to scratch a living, he was, in the past, also vulnerable to plunder in more direct ways. We have already mentioned the payment of tribute to the lords. A striking feature of these payments was their erratic nature. No uniform rate was ever fixed. Not only did they vary from place to place but they also varied from time to time. The *gultegna*, i.e. the feudal lord, could demand payments for all sorts of reasons. For example, every time he prepared to hold a party, which he did quite often, he collected cattle and grain from the peasants in addition to the services they normally performed for him.

Wars have been a very frequent phenomenon throughout Ethiopian history and the fighting was often accompanied by looting. Two missionary travellers, C.W. Isenberg and J.L. Krapf, visited Ethiopia in the middle of the 19th century, and the following entry in their diary, for 24 March 1842, is revealing:

> The present population of Lasta seems to be almost nothing, having been destroyed by famine, war and sickness, as I was told by the natives whom I asked about this subject. Ras Ali (lord of Begemedir and the Amhara provinces) was blamed for having ravaged the country several years ago in the most barbarous manner.
>
> . . . Thus we had arrived on the frontier of the Wag country which is

> decidely one of the most important and interesting provinces of Eastern Abyssinia. It would admit a larger population and a high degree of cultivation of the soil, if a better government ruled this country. It would be necessary, however, for such a government to do away with the system of annually plundering their own subjects. . . . At present the Governor comes annually with his troops and takes away what he pleases . . .'[33]

We discover that such behaviour was not out of the ordinary from the account written by T.C. Plowden, a British adventurer. He was in the camp of Biru Goshu, the lord of Gojam in the middle of the 19th century, and marched with that lord and his army on a campaign to the lands south of the Abbay (Blue Nile) river:

> We made a forced march the next day . . . (and) we encamped . . . close to the valley of the Nile . . . scarcely had we encamped, when the drum was beaten and the order was given to plunder the valley beneath us. This was only from want of corn, there being no quarrel, the headman (of the village) in fact being in the camp, totally unsuspecting, and receiving only half an hour's warning from Borru to remove his family to a place of safety. That there might be no opposition, Borru had previously sent away all the male inhabitants of the valley . . . to carry corn, honey, to maintain his stronghold; as it was, however, two or three soldiers were killed. The stream of plunder was unbroken for three days, and such was the fertility of the land, that though the tract was but a few miles in extent each way, the corn brought was calculated to be a sufficient provision for six months, and four times as much had been burnt in firing the houses. The cry of hunger (among the soldiery) was changed for songs and merriment, and the thoughtless soldiery, as usual, began to eat as much as they could manage, caring little when it might be finished.[34]

Other travellers' accounts are full of similar incidents. The famine of 1889-92 that devastated Gojam was partly caused, according to Alaqa Lemma, a contemporary observer, by the destruction of livestock in the 1887 campaign of Yohannis in Gojam. Yohannis' army showed no mercy, either to the people or to the cattle.

The political crises of 1888-1889 saw much movement of troops over most of the northern provinces of the country. Ethiopia at the time was engaged in a grave conflict with Italy in the north and with the Mahdists of the Sudan to the west. The former were trying to push into the northern highlands from which to colonise the country and the latter had declared a war to destroy Ethiopia. True to their word, the Mahdists devastated the Gonder area. Internally, too, the situation was fraught with difficulty. Relations between the three powerful lords of the country were not at all stable. Yohannis IV suspected that *Nigus* (King) Tecle Haimanot of Gojam and *Nigus* Menilek of Shewa were intriguing against him and decided to punish them. Large armies consequently manoeuvred and marched across the land, 'eating' the countryside as they went. It was after these events that the Great Famine of 1888-92 took hold – a famine in which hungry people died by the thousand.

So we see that whatever remained in the hands of the peasant after he had paid tribute to his lord tended to be taken from him by the feudal levies. Indeed, a constant feature of Ethiopian society throughout the centuries was the peasant's utter defencelessness. There was nobody, no institution to protect him from the lords, from the latter's mercenary armies and from the marauding bandits. Especially in times of civil war when alliances kept changing and the ensuing effects disrupted entire communities, bandits were a force to reckon with and the peasants had to feed them, too. But the lords, who took their tribute for granted, never saw fit to come to the aid of the peasants and rescue them from these predators.

The system of quartering was particularly ruinous. When armies marched, they tended not to carry their provisions with them. Instead, the soldiers would be billeted in the dwellings of the peasants in the areas through which the armies passed, with the result that those least able to do so found themselves providing shelter as well as food for the destructive passers-by. Nor were the levies content to eat the same food as their unwilling hosts. They lorded it over the peasants and demanded meat and butter. Generally the soldiers were worse than the locusts because, as Pankhurst puts it:

> 'the latter destroyed what was in the fields, but the former also seized what had been gathered into the house.'[35]

Observers were unanimous about the role of 'bad government' in the grinding impoverishment of Ethiopia's peasants. The famous 18th century Scottish traveller, James Bruce, stated, for example, that 'Large ants, and prodigious swarms of rats and mice . . . consume immense quantities of grain,' and observed 'to these plagues may be added still one, the greatest of them all, bad government, which speedily destroys all the advantages they reap from nature, climate and situation.'[36]

Falling endlessly victim to all these forms of robbery, the Ethiopian peasant has nearly always been left with very little to feed himself properly, let alone to put food aside against bad times. Since time immemorial he has been weak, under-nourished and teetering on the brink of starvation. This syndrome of defenceless inferiority and ruthless expropriation explains why the peasant seems never to have learned from past experience to prepare for future droughts: he has simply never been in a position to make any serious preparation. His seeming apathy is the logical outcome of an oppression that only came to an end in 1974.

Pastoralism and Drought

Ethiopia is not, of course, a land of peasants alone. It is also a land of pastoralists, and they too, over the centuries, have suffered grievously from the cycle of droughts that has devastated the country. A recent study on the Somali provides insights that are instructive for our purpose.

> Meteorological records and oral recollections from this century alone indicate that the Somali Peninsula is visited by serious drought at least once every 20 to 25 years and that less severe or briefer periods of dryness can be expected once or twice in the interim. A serious drought is one that is both prolonged (two or more rainy seasons with inadequate or no rainfall) and widespread . . . serious drought typically produces livestock losses in excess of 40 per cent of a land's composite holdings, particularly of sheep and cattle, and individual families may lose much more. Famine may result, particularly among the very young and the very old . . . On the other hand, some local districts experience severe shortfalls of rain every three or four years, and other natural disasters such as locust invasions or animal epidemics may produce famine conditions even in years when rainfall is perfectly adequate.[37]

Recurring droughts are common to pastoral areas all over the world, including Ethiopia's semi-arid regions. Experts indicate that in such areas the situation reaches crisis-point on average once every 10 years.[38] The same study lists the drought years in the Horn of Africa in the present century:

> Widespread drought occurred in former Italian Somalia in 1910-12, 1921-22, 1931-33, 1943-44, 1951-52, and 1963-65. For British Somaliland, the incidence of reported drought is much greater: 1911-12, 1914, 1918, 1922, 1927-28, 1933-34, 1938, 1943, 1950-51, 1959, 1968-69, and 1973-74.[39]

Two principal causes of damage to the pastoral way of life may be identified, namely natural phenomena and certain features of the pastoral economy itself.

The natural factors have to do principally with the shortage of rainfall; the amount of rain has fluctuated enormously in recent times. As for the pastoral economy, a study jointly sponsored by the RRC and the UN Development Programme in 1983 reported that:

> Overgrazing is one salient feature of pastoral nomadism. The general tendency of the nomads is to maximise their herd size on the communal grazing territory in order to avert the risk associated with owning a small size of herd. The belief is that by owning a large size of herd one can be left with a buffer stock when drought or other calamities strike. This economic strategy has resulted in the overgrazing and destruction of the natural vegetation in some areas.[40]

Herd size is also a status symbol which in turn intensifies the desire of pastoralists to maximise their holdings. But the over-crowding that results leaves the cattle vulnerable to even the slightest decline in rainfall. The above-mentioned study emphasises that 'the natural ecological balance in all (the lowland) regions (in Ethiopia and the Horn) is very delicate and does not leave much to tamper with.'[41] And when drought has periodically disrupted the ecological balance it has frequently been followed by famine. Famine, in turn, has been responsible for a human phenomenon noticed throughout the centuries, i.e. a constant push by the people from the lowlands into the highlands. This population pressure has been a perennial source of socio-political instability.[42] Whether or not these population migrations were caused solely by recurrent drought is difficult to say, but the available evidence indicates that there is a connection between the two. Dr. Merid W. Aregay, who considers population movement as one possible factor in the conflict between the Christian and the Adal Muslim Kingdom of medieval Ethiopia, makes the following comment:

> Serious famine caused by drought affected much of the Horn and the whole of Yemen in 1539 and 1540. The drought of the 1560s which killed so many people in Harrar was equally disastrous in the other parts of the Ethiopian highlands. In all likelihood these and other unreported droughts were responsible for the major population dislocations that the whole Horn of Africa experienced during these years.[43]

The 16th century was one of the most eventful periods in the history of the Horn. It was in this century that the great wars between the state of Adal and the Christian kingdom were fought, and it was in this century that the Oromo migrations began. However, social dislocation and population movements were not peculiar to the 16th century alone, but have been reported right up to the present time.

The Context of the 1974 Revolution

Some of the worst features of feudal Ethiopia were compounded in the transition from a feudal to a feudo-bourgeois system. Amongst the new factors that began to emerge from traditional Ethiopia were elements of a 'modern' state. This was of course a hybrid state, in the sense that it had slowly evolved out of feudalism when the latter came into contact with European capitalism during the last quarter of the 19th century. Thus there was much that was traditional and archaic in it side by side with modern elements and institutions. It is partly for this reason that the country's big and sprawling bureaucracy was so clumsy and moved so slowly.

The state that began to emerge at the turn of the century was one in which the feudal class was trying to maintain its position and wealth in a fast-changing world. By definition, the state could not, therefore, be used to transform the society. One of the state's main shortcomings was its inability to mobilize or transfer resources for any major undertaking. The ruling class was opposed to any fundamental change and insensitive to the problems of the people. Indeed, the rulers aggravated the already miserable condition of the peasantry by intensifying their exploitation in order to enjoy the pleasures of the modern world. Therefore, whenever a natural disaster took place, they paid little attention. The state was, in any case, too lethargic, too slow and inefficient to institute serious emergency measures. This is the social and political context in which we have to view the famine of the 1960s and 1970s which led to the Revolution of 1974.

It would be quite wrong to assume that there were no famines in Ethiopia during the first four decades of this century. The first, in fact, took place between 1916 and 1920. A famine in 1927-28 hit Wello, northern Tigrai, parts of Begemdir and northern Shewa. Though we do not know which provinces were affected in 1934-35, there is no doubt that there was also a famine at that time. In the years 1947-50 the lowland regions of the Afar and Issa were ravaged by famine, while Tigrai suffered simultaneously from a locust invasion and a drought. Another famine broke out in 1957-58. It was called *shenqute* (the whipper), a name which indicates its severity.

In 1964-65 drought swept eight *awrajas*, severely affecting two of them – Wag and Lasta. In subsequent years 10 out of Ethiopia's 14 regions were hit by drought conditions which continued to grow in severity, reaching a peak in 1972-74 when 200,000 people died in Wello administrative region alone.

The resulting famine, as we show in the next chapter, helped to trigger off the Revolution of 1974. The imperial order crumbled and was swept aside. One of the first steps that the Revolution took was to nurture an institution charged exclusively with the task of saving the lives of the famine-stricken and to rehabilitate them. This institution, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, was the first of its kind ever to be established in the long history of Ethiopia.

CHAPTER 3

THE DROUGHT OF 1972-74: FALSE PRIDE AND A FAILURE OF BUREAUCRACY

THE Relief and Rehabilitation Commission emerged out of the crucible of the 1972-74 drought – a drought which, as we have noted, was one of the worst in recent Ethiopian history in terms of the death toll. About 200,000 people perished owing to the lack of such basic items as food, water and medical care.

The number of deaths was so large because the handling of even the limited relief activities before the creation of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) was extremely inadequate. The imperial regime responded to the famine of 1964-65 and again to that of 1972-74 in a very disorganized and extremely inefficient manner. Only nominal amounts of relief items were despatched to the problem areas and their distribution was both slow and erratic. Some areas were simply ignored owing to shortages. The reason for all this was the 'rather sluggish implementation of relief . . . programmes' by the imperial government.[1] Things were instead left to functionaries at the local level with no policies or guidelines and little support from the central administration. It would perhaps be a futile exercise to try to estimate how many of the dead might have been saved had the government organized itself more adequately to mount the necessary relief operation.[2]

The 1972-74 drought had deep roots, and its origins can be traced back clearly at least to 1964 when acute food deficits first began to be noticed in Wello.

In 1964-65, drought hit eight *awrajas* of Wello: Ambasel, Lasta, Raya and Kobo, Werehimenu, Wag, Kalu, Yejju and Dessie Zuria. Hunger was reported in all of these places. The two most severely hit areas were Wag and Lasta. In Lasta *awraja* alone an estimated 40,000 people starved.[3] Grain was eventually found, even if the amount was far below what was needed. For a variety of reasons the *awraja* governor was unable to go and collect it from the regional capital, Dessie, with the result that the grain got spoiled in the warehouse. This was a particularly bad case of bureaucratic inefficiency; however, most of the *awrajas* did not get relief aid in time. Very often they were ignored by the central government.

The number of people affected was large, but so far no detailed study of this nationwide drought has been published.[4] Data has yet to be systematically collected from all of the areas; nor have all the district, provincial and ministerial archives been consulted.

This being said, it is instructive to look at the events that took place in a number of *awrajas* of Wello, since these events throw light on the attitudes and behaviour of the now-defunct imperial regime.

The existence of an acute food deficit and the subsequent disasters of 1965-66 were communicated by the Wello office and lower hierarchies to the central authorities between 5 August 1965 and 4 August 1970.[5] Despite these warnings, however, the grim drought that was developing in the region was ignored.

In early October 1966, for example, a visit was made to Wag and Lasta, two of Wello's *awrajas* (provinces) by the then head of the region, Administrator Mamo Seyoum. Riding on a mule, it took the administrator 15 days to cover the distance between Dessie, capital of Wello, and Sekota, capital of Wag, and to see some of the stricken places in the *awraja*. Having visited some *weredas*, the administrator cut short his trip and returned to Dessie because he was afraid of falling prey to the communicable diseases that were rife in the areas in question. He was, nevertheless, shocked by the misery of the people and asked the central authorities to despatch grain with a view to limiting the deaths that had in fact begun a year earlier. In a letter to the Minister of Interior, he cogently stated the threefold nature of the problem that had engulfed the *awrajas*: 'People face acute shortages of grain with the result that many have left their localities in search of food; disease is rampant and many work-oxen have perished because of the drought.'[6] He suggested to the Interior Minister that the problem be carefully studied and that grain be sent immediately before the main-season rains rendered transportation difficult.

The danger was indeed enormous. In three *awrajas* alone (Lasta, Kalu and Dessie Zuria), an estimated total population of 145,000 faced starvation.[7] Though figures are not available, six other *awrajas* (Ambasel, Awsa, Raya and Kobo, Werehimenu, Wag and Yejju) were also in a similar situation. The grain despatched was nowhere near what was required. Some 600 metric tons of grain were distributed in Dessie Zuria, 100 metric tons in Wag and 18 metric tons in Raya and Kobo.[8] The grain hauled to Ambasel and Lasta was not distributed because the then governor failed to collect it. Small amounts of grain were sent to some of the *awrajas*, but there is no evidence that these were in fact distributed.[9]

In a letter to the Emperor dated 4 July 1967, Administrator Mamo stated that while Wag had received some assistance, the grain earmarked for Lasta had not been moved to most of the affected areas because of the lack of roads.[10] He then advised that infrastructural projects be started and services, social as well as physical, be extended, and that general developmental measures be mounted quickly in order to break out of the cycle of recurring drought in the two areas.[11]

In the two letters he wrote to the Emperor, one of them undated, the administrator requested that the people of the two *awrajas* be provided with more food and clothing, adding, however, that those in Lasta could not be reached easily by surface transportation.[12] He also suggested that people from a segment of the two *awrajas* be resettled in Gamo Gofa on the basis of a previous understanding that he had with the administrator of that region.[13] The imperial government, including the Emperor, the Crown Prince and the Prime Minister, were informed in no uncertain terms and pressed to do something about the drought that had been spreading in Wello region for four years; but Administrator Mamo Seyoum's entreaties and warnings seemed to fall on deaf ears for all the response they elicited.[14]

Nothing much was done in respect of relief and resettlement as there was no further communication relating to these matters. The administrator, it seems, began to change his way of thinking afterwards. He raised the idea of a food reserve and took steps to put this idea into practice in Wello. After discussions with the community, it was agreed that every farming household should contribute a minimum of one *qunna* (five kilos) of grain annually towards the reserve.[15] Relatively well-to-do farmers and some landlords all agreed to contribute up to five quintals.

In line with this agreement, a total of 212 metric tons was collected in 1964-65 from Dessie Zuria, Ambasel, Yejju, Kalu and Werelu.[16] Once this system got off the ground, the administrator turned his energies to the construction of stores and grain silos in all of the 12 *awrajas* concerned. The idea of the food reserve and storage facilities was welcomed by the central government because it believed that this would relieve it of the burden of assisting the drought victims, and that the scheme would also awake a spirit of self-help in the people.[17] The Ministry of Agriculture was instructed to contact other concerned ministries and organizations and external sources in order to give the programme a powerful boost.[18]

It was estimated that if the households of each *awraja* in the regions raised 2,000 metric tons, a total of 24,000 metric tons would be stored at the end of each harvest.[19] Unfortunately, when Administrator Mamo was replaced by another, the whole project was abandoned and then forgotten.

Meanwhile, the food shortages in the region grew worse. Bad harvests in some areas had been reported to the central authorities for some years.[20] However, the government did not respond in spite of a barrage of letters from local authorities. In September 1970, four *awrajas* – Raya and Kobo, Awsa, Ambasel and Lasta – experienced particularly severe drought conditions which made the food shortage even more critical.[21] It is reported that 2,000 quintals of grain were distributed to the needy in Raya and Kobo while 3,000 quintals were made available for Awsa. There is no record as to whether or not distribution took place in Ambasel and Lasta.

The 1972-74 drought hit nine *awrajas* – Werehimenu, Dessie Zuria, Borena, Werilu, Yejju, Wag, Wadela Delanta, Kalu, and Awsa. The disaster was reported to the central authorities. Letters were exchanged between the Wello administration office and lower hierarchies between October 1971 and February 1973 with a view to urging the authorities to take measures to mitigate the effects of drought. During this period it was reported that only 24 metric tons were given to the people of Werehimenu, 35 metric tons to those of Werilu in addition to the exemption from agricultural tax; 15 metric tons were contributed by the local people to Yejju and 120 metric tons were dispatched to Wag. According to the report of the Inquiry Commission, there was no information on the number of people affected, except for Wag where the hungry totalled 5,000.[22]

The 1972-74 drought and the subsequent scenario should be looked at against this background. As is evidenced by the above statistics, little was done to contain the problem from the start, either by the central government or by the authorities at the local level.

Failure to take the minimum of measures in good time between 1964 and 1973 slowly drained the meagre grain stocks and ultimately seed grain, in the hands of the drought victims, culminating in untold misery for close to a million people at the height of the drought. But the imperial government did not take any meaningful measures to mitigate the situation.

The central government merely established the Grain Deficit Study Committee (GDSC) in November 1971, five months after the failure of the 1971 *meher* (main season) rains and the onset of starvation in Ethiopia.[23]

The Committee at first consisted of members from the Ministries of Community Development and Social Affairs, Agriculture, Interior, and Finance, and the Office of the Prime Minister. Later, because of the 'gravity' of the situation, which demanded the immediate provision of food, water and health services, it was decided that the organizations involved should be increased by six more from various ministries and government agencies. The new members of the Committee were the Ministries of Public Health, Defence, Public Works and Water Resources, Commerce and Industry, and Information, and the Ethiopian Police.[24]

Despite the alarming dimensions which the suffering was assuming, the authorities continued to exchange letters between themselves, explaining to one another the gravity of the impending disaster. They took no concrete action at all. The letters exchanged between Awsa *awraja* and *wereda* authorities, on the one hand, and the Wello administration office and via this the central authorities on the other, are a good example of the time wasted in getting across the point that people were in fact already starving. Some 22 months of letter communications had to take place before an order was given by the central authorities to despatch 50 metric tons of grain for the people in Bati *wereda* who had been hard hit by the drought which subsequently killed 114 people.[25] (*See Appendix* 5)

One of the first areas of Wello to be hit by the failure of rain in the 1971 rainy season was the *awraja* of Raya and Kobo. The provincial office reported on *Meskerem* 27 1964 (October 1971) that there had been a crop failure. A few days later, on *Tikemt* 2, the chief municipal officer of Alamata town also reported that the province had been hit by drought. (There is a difference of seven to eight years, depending on time of year, between Ethiopia's Julian calendar and the West's Gregorian calendar.) On the same day but in a far-off place (Addis Ababa) two Members of Parliament explained to the Crown Prince that the people could not pay their taxes because of the failure of the rains in 1971. They also appealed to the President of the then lower House of Parliament who referred the question to the Ministry of Interior. The people also submitted a request to the Ministry of the Interior for the remission of taxes.

On *Tikemt* 22 (November 1971) the regional governor wrote to the provincial governor asking him to specify the amount and kind of relief that was required. The latter took no less than *38 days* to respond, and then only to ask for *memeria* (specific guidance) as to how to compile the required information. The provincial governor reported back on *Tahesses* 25 (December 1971) with the findings of a committee he had set up to study the relief and tax remission matters. The regional office set up its own committee to 'study' the problem. It then passed on the reports of its committee to the Ministry of Interior in a letter dated *Miazia* 8 (April 1972). Between the previous letter and this one three whole months had elapsed. But the Ministry of Interior only referred the matter to the Ministry of Community Development and Social Affairs on *Miazia* 26 (May 1972) with a copy to the regional office. Apparently because this Ministry did not respond on time, the regional office wrote to it on *Sene* 18 (June 1972) – that is to say, a little more than a month later. The Minister of Community Development, who was also Chairman of the Grain Deficit Study Committee set up earlier by the Council of Ministers, called a meeting of this committee to discuss the matter. Between the first letter from the provincial office and the meeting of this committee eight and a half months had passed. This gives an idea of the bureaucracy's lack of a sense of urgency and its inefficiency.

In September 1972 the provincial office at last submitted its report on the population and areas affected and the composition and volume of the relief aid required. In the same month, the regional office, which was now being flooded by similar reports from the other provinces, referred the matter to the two Ministries concerned. The latter did not respond quickly, but a month later, on *Tikemt* 20 (October 1972), the Ministry of Community Development brought up the matter before the Council of Ministers with the recommendation that 200 metric tons of grain be given to the province, a far cry from the 6,393 metric tons originally requested by the regional office. Moreover, the Council of Ministers also decided that the regional office should cover the transportation expenses and buy the necessary sacks from its own resources.

That decision was made in October 1972. In November, the regional office was notified by the Grain Corporation that it had to go to Asmara to collect its 200 tons. This immediately created a transportation crisis. The governor of the region wrote to the Minister of Community Development, in a letter dated *Tikemt* 29, 1965 (November 1972), that the region could not afford the cost of freight from Asmara and that he had to be given the money. He was soon told, however, that there was no money. He therefore persuaded the merchants of Dessie, towards the end of November 1972, to raise Birr 8,000.

One year, two months and seven days after it was first requested, the grain finally reached the place where it was needed. But even then it was not immediately distributed to the people because there was no official stationery on which to register how the relief was actually distributed.

The Grain Deficit Study Committee was not satisfied with the reports that had come in from the *awraja* and the regional office, and it complained that the latter had not submitted a precise report. Moreover, it expressed its suspicion that the regional office was exaggerating the number of people affected and the territorial extent of the drought. It therefore notified the Ministry of Interior (but not the regional office) that another report based on another study would have to be submitted to it on *Hamle* 23 (July 1972). The Ministry of the Interior passed on its decisions to the regional office on *Hamle* 4 (July 1972). The regional office in its turn instructed the provincial office in a letter dated *Hamle* 11 to submit a precise report. A month later, on *Nehessie* 12 (August 1972), when the provincial office had failed to submit its reports, the regional office again instructed it to send the said report urgently.

By now it was *Meskerem* 1965 (September 1972). Nature had again been unkind in the normally rainy months of June, July and August and the drought situation had worsened. Hunger drove some of the people to looting. The regional authorities reported the matter to the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Community Development and Social Affairs, warning that matters might get worse. What was even more alarming was that a band of armed men from seven villages was only just talked out of looting the Afar people.

The GDSC received reports on drought conditions from the four worst-hit regions – Wello, Tigrai, northern Shewa, and Gonder. Around 1.9 million people in 23 *awrajas* were reported to be affected in 1973.

As shown in Table 2, the hardest hit regions were Tigrai and Wello. Some 46,500 metric tons of grain and 121,000 cartons of supplementary food were required to feed the affected population. Despite the existence of this estimate of the victims and their requirements, no action was taken to ameliorate the situation.

The GDSC felt that the matter should be studied before it could take any action. It despatched one of its nine sub-committees,

TABLE 2
Population Affected, by Region, and Requirements

Affected Areas			Requirements	
Admin. Region	No. of *weredas* affected	Population	Grain (metric tons)	Supplementary Food (cartons)
Wello	12	816,000	20,000	57,142
Tigrai	7	699,000	17,476	39,685
Shewa	3	306,772	7,670	17,542
Gonder	1	52,275	1,307	6,971
Total	**23**	**1,874,047**	**46,453**	**121,340**

Source: Computed from GDSC Draft Report, 'Information on Relief Assistance Requested for Drought-Stricken Areas of some Governorates General and *Awrajas* in the Empire', Addis Ababa, in RRC Archives, File no. 324/8.

TABLE 3
Immediate Requirements Recommended by the GDSC for Wello, Tigrai and Northern Shewa

	Affected Areas		Requirements		
Region	Number of *weredas* affected	Population	Grain (metric tons)	Supplementary Food (cartons)	Remarks
Wello	12	300,000	7,500	4,652	Plus
Tigrai	9	215,000	3,947	1,250	500 mt
Shoa	3	81,000	2,438	–	of seeds
Gonder	–	–	–	–	
Total	24	596,000	13,885	4,902	

Source: Computed from 'Information on Relief Assistance Requested for Drought-Stricken Areas of some Governorates General and *Awrajas* in the Empire' Addis Ababa, in RRC Archives, File no. 324/8.

(established earlier) among which were those in charge of domestic and foreign assistance and field information and assessment, to the drought-stricken areas. The sub-committee came up with an estimate that some 596,000 people were in need of immediate assistance.[26] Gonder was excluded on the pretext that the 'duration for which assistance was needed was not indicated by the regional office.'[27] The results of the findings of the Committee are shown in Table 3.

These figures demonstrate that the problem was so serious that it required a rapid deployment of relief. The GDSC, however, feeble as it was, discussed its sub-committee's reports and lamented the fact that there were no resources on hand to help the people affected. Considering the constraints on resources, the assistance available at that time and the method of transportation to be used for the distribution of the relief, it was able to allot initially only 1,700 metric tons for the regions. (See Table 4.) However, it was not possible for the Committee actually to send any grain to Wello and the other regions until June 1973 when towns in the region were inundated by hungry people from rural areas.[28] This, in effect, meant that whatever supply was despatched by the central government reached the destitute one year after the chronic shortages had been reported and after people had begun to die of starvation.

TABLE 4
Grain Distribution Schedule for Drought-Affected People in Wello, Tigrai and Shewa

Region	Distribution centres	Quantity of grain allotted (metric tons)
Wello	14	800
Tigrai	–	500
Shewa	4	400
Total	18	1,700

Source: Computed from 'Information on Drought Relief Assistance Requested for the Drought-Stricken Areas of some Governorates General and *Awrajas* in the Empire', GDSC, in RRC Archives, File no. 324/8.

The shortage of transportation posed considerable difficulties. Although the Committee tried to circumvent the problem by mobilizing government and private trucks, it was still unable to reach the victims swiftly. Even the meagre relief it allotted to the regions could not be transported easily. The main season's rains – which would further hamper road transportation – were expected, and the GDSC intervened to send a further 5,000 metric tons of relief grain and 4,000 metric tons of seeds before their onset, and, at the same time, called for the assistance of voluntary organizations to move the cargoes.[29]

Although the number of the participating organizations had been increased with a view to solving such difficult problems, the performance of GDSC was limited on two counts. First, the financial and material resources at the disposal of the Committee were negligible in relation to the extent of the disaster. The government was not ready to allocate funds commensurate with the enormity of the problem and the operations that needed to be mounted. Second, the terms of reference accorded it were vague and loose. In the letter establishing the Committee, emphasis was given to the *study* of the problem rather than to the launching of immediate relief operations. It was not, in other words, charged in clear terms with the responsibility for campaigning, fund raising and distribution of relief to the affected people. Later the name itself was changed, unofficially, into the 'National Emergency Committee' when it became evident that the famine was neither temporary nor confined to only a few *weredas.*[30] It was at this point that membership of the GDSC increased from five to 11, as pointed out earlier. But in spite of this, the performance of this National Committee remained insignificant.

It had, therefore, to seek the assistance of voluntary agencies, domestic-based associations and *idirs* (neighbourhood aid groups). In spite of this, however, very little relief material and cash were raised. There were two main reaons for this state of affairs. Firstly, the government was quite simply very reluctant to publicize the drought for fear of losing face. The second reason why the GDSC's efforts made very little difference was that there was no grain on hand to distribute to the starving people. And the reason why there were no reserves of food was that, as we explained earlier, the feudal agricultural system seriously limited the amount of food that could be grown in the first place.

This 'venture' of the GDSC was a sluggish and ultimately a futile relief operation. Despite reports from the regional administration in the famine areas, and despite the data on the affected population gathered by the field assessment sub-committee of the GDSC and from donor groups, especially the World Food Programme, the Christian Relief Fund and others, the government failed to mount the necessary operation. Even the lucid and candid report, to which we have already referred, of the then Minister of Interior, who had been sent to Wello by the Emperor on a special assignment to look into the problem, could not galvanize the system into action.

According to the Interior Minister's report, children were seen begging for bread on the main Addis Ababa-Asmara highway.

Passengers on buses gave them bread and threw them coins. Cooked food was also provided in temporary shelters in Dessie by the town dwellers and domestic voluntary organizations and by the Catholic Mission there. The number of people with emaciated bodies was so large and the condition of the cattle as well as the wildlife so bad that they were hardly able to walk.[31] It was suggested in the report that short- and long-term measures be taken to improve the situation in Wello. The situation deteriorated as time passed. The more the government underplayed the consequences of the drought, the hungrier the people became and the greater the exodus from the countryside to the towns in Wello in the hope of finding food. Quite a number of people also migrated to other parts of the country–notably the south and south-west. Describing this situation, Professor A. Sen of Oxford University in his book *Poverty and Famines*, has this to say:

> In December 1972 the Ethiopian Red Cross was already trying to help over a thousand refugees from Wello who had arrived outside Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital. By early 1973, crowds were lining parts of the north-south highway through Wello, stopping buses and cars to ask for food.[32]

It was claimed that, by August 1973, 109,808 victims who visited township distribution centres had received some kind of assistance and returned to their homes. The same report estimated that the number of victims migrating to towns would reach 712,000 that same month.[33]

Earlier, in June 1973, a further attempt had been made to alert the government to the proportions of the disaster that was enveloping the region. The World Food Programme adviser, after a visit to 16 towns in Wello and northern Shewa, lamented the fact that the relief assistance received by the victims hitherto was grossly inadequate and irregular.[34] The adviser's report urged the government immediately to step up its relief operations and come quickly to the rescue of the distressed people. The amount of grain that had been sent by the government from Addis Ababa until June was only 600 metric tons for all of the 17 distribution centres visited.[35] Other sources, particularly government and autonomous agency employees as well as the Addis Ababa University community, had managed to distribute more – some 805 metric tons since the time relief operations started in April that year.[36]

These figures show that employees and students succeeded in doing more than the government to help relieve the horrendous suffering, and underline just how apathetic and indifferent the government was even when it knew that whole sections of the population were falling down from weakness and dying throughout the countryside.

Only a few organizations, among whom were the 'American Mission'[37] *[sic]* and the World Food Programme (WFP), were contacted through the Planning Commission Office, and both responded positively.[38] The WFP pledged 10,000 metric tons and the US organization agreed to provide 8,000 metric tons, half of which was already on its way.[39]

Between June and September 1973, the government distributed 5,600 metric tons of grain, including the 600 metric tons it had given out until June 1973, to the afflicted populations of Wello, Tigrai and northern Shewa. Of this, only 2,000 metric tons was from the Grain Board,[40] very much less than half of what had been recommended by the GDSC's information and assessment committee, i.e. a total for Wello, Tigrai and northern Shewa of 13,885 metric tons.[41] This figure is also extremely low when compared with the actual requirements submitted by the regional administrative office (see Tables 2 and 3 above), which were verified and supported by the Planning Commission Office and an ad-hoc committee of the Christian Relief Fund.[42]

Up to this date, local contributions (including those of Ethiopians living abroad) consisted of 1,090 metric tons of rice from the Tendaho Agricultural Plantation and from three individual farmers. The Ministry of Health and the Shola Milk Industry furnished 34,111 kilograms of powdered milk and 20,228 kilograms of milk, respectively.[43] The Ethio-Japan Textiles Company donated 2,500 glass cups, earthen cups and funnels.[44]

The pathetic performance of the authorities made domestic organizations decide to have nothing to do with the GDSC, an instrument of the government which had isolated itself from the people and their problems. Employees of the Ethiopian Electric Light and Power Authority (EELPA), the University community and the Christian Relief Committee collected amongst them Birr 361,000 for the relief of the affected people. In all, domestic sources contributed Birr 5.5 million towards the relief effort, excluding the funds raised in Wello and Tigrai regions.

The government's performance after September 1973 was not much better. It distributed 9,000 metric tons of grain, bringing its total disbursement to 14,600 metric tons.[45] Meanwhile the exodus from the stricken regions became more desperate, and things began to get out of hand. People in Wello were now dying in large numbers every day.

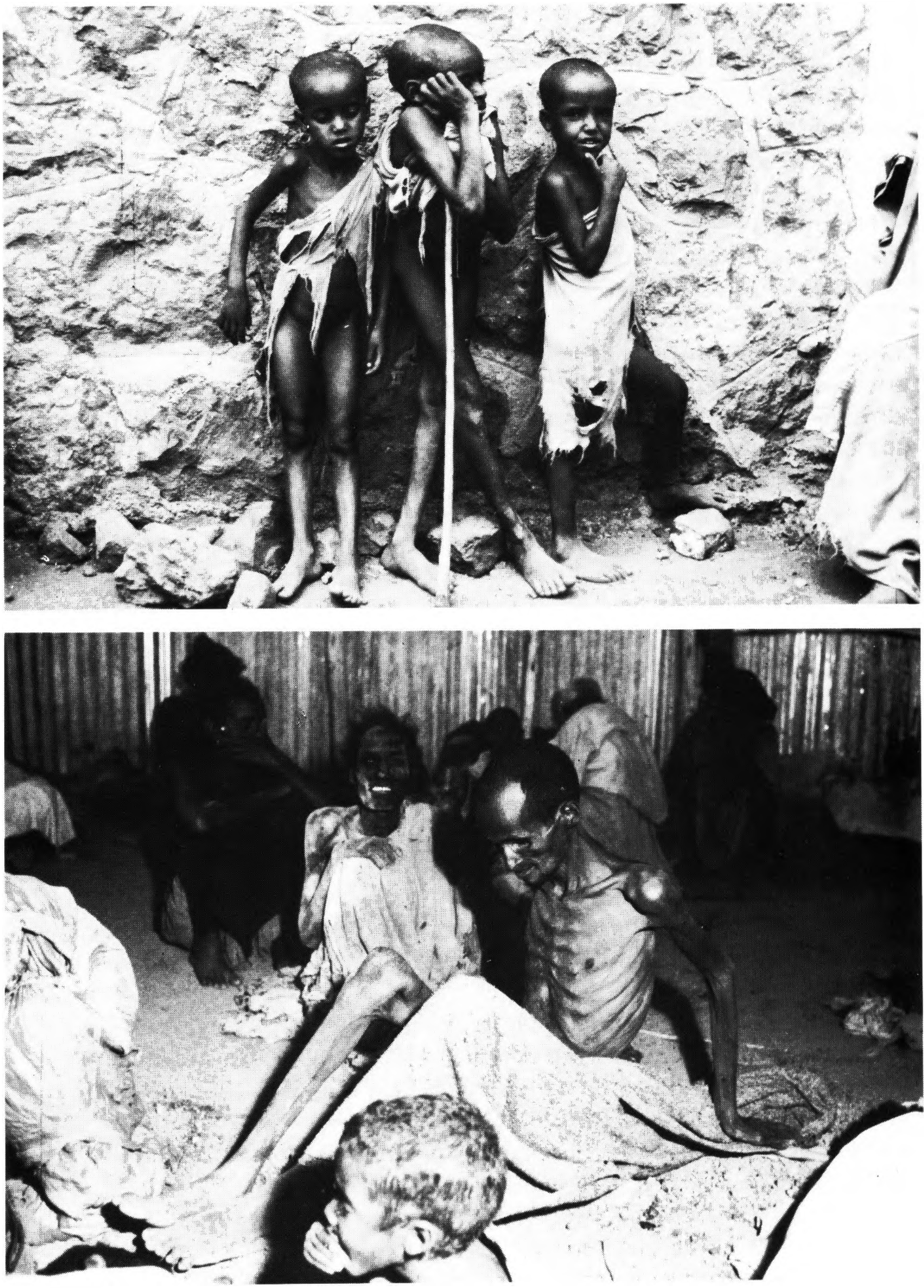
The independent missions, among which were the World Food Programme, the Christian Relief Fund, the League of Red Cross Societies and USAID, had their own interpretations of the situation. The government and the Ethiopian public as well as international organizations, voluntary agencies and bilateral assistance representatives worked independently of one another to contain the effects of the drought. This individual organizational input had a limiting effect on the overall effort.

Although the consequences of the 1972-74 famine have not been fully analyzed and documented, the connection between the famine and the overthrow of the imperial regime has been widely noted. True though it is that the roots of the 1974 Revolution go deep into Ethiopia's history and into the class nature of society, it was the famine in Wello that finally opened the eyes of the people and exposed the corruption of the rulers. The latter's final blunders were to suppress news of the people's hardship and suffering and their reluctance to do anything constructive to help the victims. It may well be that the ruling class, having been so out of touch with reality, was inherently incapable of undertaking any large-scale rescue operation. Be that as it may, the resentment that had been simmering for ages at last boiled over and swept away the aristocratic class and its apparatus of privilege.

In its final months in power the regime tried strenuously to conceal all news of the famine. It repeatedly denied to the Ethiopian as well as to the international public that anything like a famine existed in the country.

Inevitably, however, despite the denials, the world in the end came to know about the famine in an irrefutable way. The British television journalist, Jonathan Dimbleby, visited Ethiopia in September 1973, went to Wello and filmed the horrifying scenes he saw. When his film, entitled *The Hidden Hunger*, was shown in Europe and the USA, both public and governments were shocked and scandalized.

Within Ethiopia itself, university staff and students were among the first to see the film of the famine and to voice their indignation. Even at this stage, strenuous efforts were made to suppress them and to clamp down on the free flow of information about the disaster.



Victims of the 1972-74 famine.

Gradually but surely, however, the people of Ethiopia came to know what was happening to their kith and kin. It was like an awakening from a long sleep; more than anything else, what this famine exposed to them was the cruel and insensitive nature of the regime under which they lived.

Angered by the government's perfunctory interest in the disaster, members of the public, of their own accord, organized themselves and went to Wello to bring back eye-witness accounts of the disgraceful events that were taking place in the afflicted areas. They brought back pictures, too. No sooner were the reports of these groups heard than campaigns were launched everywhere to raise funds, materials and equipment, especially in the main towns, including Addis Ababa.

What had been labelled 'secret' and 'top secret' in government correspondence soon came out into the open. The hidden famine became *Ye-adebabay mister*, an open secret. Several groups challenged the government and exposed the famine in Wello with every means at their disposal, including leaflets and frank discussions during fund-raising campaigns. A committee at (the present) Addis Ababa University reported that 'people were starving, sick and dying daily in the hunger-stricken areas,' [46] and, as in other countries, politically conscious Ethiopians used the drought and famine to attack an indifferent central government.[47]

Interest groups with varying demands put increasing pressure on the regime, which was now reeling. The official attempts to conceal the drought in Wello were particularly infuriating and added fuel to the protests which led to the resignation of the Prime Minister, Aklilu Habte Wold. The government that succeeded his was forced by the mounting public outcry to set up the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission early in March 1974 in a desperate attempt to defuse the tensions that were fast developing into a popular uprising.

SVÄLTDÖDENS LAND
HJÄLP!
DRUGS
US ships head for blockade
TV från Malta-matchen
Senegal, Etiopien... Först dog jorden -sen människorna
EXPRESSEN
BARNET RÄDDAS!
Bara accepteras av Helén
SPÄDBARN OCH HUSDJUR DÖDA
0000 dog i svält
Vpk vill ha skriftligt från Palme
DN-man belönas

The 1972-74 famine made front-page news in the international press, helping to mobilise support and succour from overseas.

CHAPTER 4

THE FOUNDING OF THE RRC AND ITS FIRST PHASE OF ACTIVITIES MARCH-AUGUST 1974.

THE Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, established in March 1974, started humanitarian work in a systematic manner for the first time in Ethiopian history, and amidst an atmosphere charged with indignation because of the hitherto extremely slow progress of relief activities. Our knowledge that large numbers of our countrymen were dying for want of adequate support had the effect of concentrating our minds as never before.

The RRC was empowered to act as a focal point for all offers of assistance for the areas affected by the drought and to make arrangements, on the basis of need, for the distribution of relief assistance provided by whatever source. The Commission was also authorised to assist the provincial teams and voluntary agencies in carrying out relief programmes as well as in preparing short-term rehabilitation projects for donor financing.[1]

The RRC came into being at a time of great unrest throughout the country. The overthrow of the previous regime and its replacement by a system geared to fulfilling the basic needs of the population at large paved the way for the strengthening of a new institution to cater for victims of all sorts of calamities.

The drought, which had started in the north, gradually spread to other areas in mid-1974 and ultimately engulfed 11 of Ethiopia's 14 administrative regions.[2] Those areas severely hit in the drought's second phase were the lowlands of Harerge, particularly the Ogaden, and Sidamo, Bale, and Gamo Gofa administrative regions. The lowland areas of Wello, Tigrai and Eritrea were also affected.

The animal population, vital to pastoral livelihood, was severely depleted. Estimated animal losses were around 80 per cent of cattle, 50 per cent of sheep and 30 per cent of camels and goats.[3] The number of nomads affected by the drought during that year was in excess of 1 million, bringing the overall total of those affected to nearly 3 million.[4]

A report produced in 1976 made these observations:

> Thousands of men, women and children who were strong enough to flee from the agonizing slow death caused by starvation migrated to various towns along the Addis Ababa-Asmara and Dessie-Assab roads. . . . It is

> believed that a significant number of these migrants lost their lives before they reached their destinations . . .
>
> The migration caused an unknown degree of family disintegration in the province. Children and parents, husbands and wives and members of the same extended families fled in different directions and at different times. The main thing was to save one's own life or to avoid witnessing the slow death of a young son or daughter, a beloved spouse or elderly parents.[5]

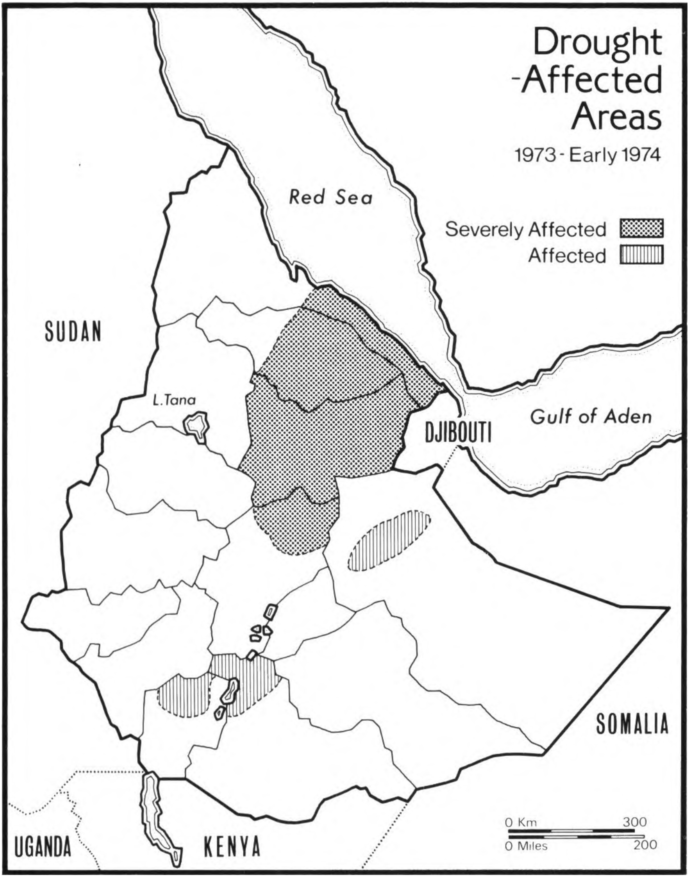
The RRC's principal objective in its initial stage of operation was to intensify relief activities in order to save as many lives as it possibly could. But the long-term rehabilitation of these drought-affected people was just as important if they were to have any hope of returning to productive activity. And this, of course, required action guided by a plan as well as financial resources set aside to create conditions in which the peasants could become productive again.

Relief Operations

The early years of the RRC's activities saw concentration more on the distribution of basic items such as food, potable water, medicine, shelters and other necessities of life. The aid was directed to areas that were the worst affected by natural calamities and was programmed to continue until the victims had become self-supporting. These early months of the RRC's existence, however, were marked by a serious lack of material and financial resources. Nor were the Commission's staff themselves very experienced in relief operations. Thus the RRC appealed to the world at large on behalf of its countrymen and, via the international media, government and donor representatives, personal contacts and all other available means, indicated the kind of assistance that was needed.

The very first requirement was grain and fortified food.[6] Then came funds to build and maintain relief shelters and aid-distribution centres. Just as urgent were medical supplies and equipment to improve the very primitive sanitary conditions in which diseases were beginning to spread. Donors were also asked to pay attention to the Commission's transportation problems, in particular the need for trucks to deliver the aid to where it was needed.

The RRC's campaigns to raise domestic and international awareness of the frightful condition of the drought victims were successful in the sense that funds and help began to flow into the country, whereas previously there had been no more than a trickle. The local



Drought-Affected Areas

1973 - Early 1974

Red Sea
Severely Affected ▩
Affected ▥
SUDAN
L. Tana
DJIBOUTI
Gulf of Aden
SOMALIA
UGANDA
KENYA
0 Km
300
0 Miles
200

media also played a part in revealing less-known aspects of the disaster and the efforts made by the world community to combat it. The *Ethiopian Herald* of 3 April 1974, for example, under the headline 'Relief Figures – What is Behind' *[sic]*, emphasized the concern and dedication of humanitarians thus:

> How different the picture would be if seen amidst the original happenings. Small school children in West German cities, for instance, rattling through the streets with their collecting boxes labelled: 'Ten cents for hungry children in Ethiopia' . . . or these private 'Ethiopian Relief Committees' set up in schools for a systematic money-saving by sacrificing formerly much cherished school activities such as excursions or the celebration of internal sporting events. Or elderly people, middle-class pensioners, admittedly hardest hit by inflation rates that make prices go wild, depositing a considerable part of their small monthly pension into a bank account nominated for Ethiopian Support.[7]

Earlier reports on the general outlines of the problem had indicated some of the relief items that were required to assist the famine-ridden populations in the drought areas for periods of up to a year. Some 900,000 people in Wello alone were estimated to have been affected and the monthly grain supply they needed was put at 9,450 metric tons.[8] Another 525,000 people in parts of Bale, Harerge, Sidamo and Gamo Gofa regions in eastern and southern Ethiopia had been hit by the drought of that year, and 8,000-9,000 metric tons of grain and supplementary food was needed in relief aid.[9] Parts of Wello, Tigrai, northern Shewa and the area around the Awash Valley were also severely affected by the drought and 150,000 metric tons of grain were required for the year's relief operations in these areas.[10] The grain requirement was computed at 25 kilograms per person per month. But for all the publicity and the effort, the gap between what was required and what was supplied was very wide.

Nevertheless, the contributions of the various international and voluntary organizations, of bilateral and other donors in 1974, included: 173,686 metric tons of grain, 22,189 metric tons of supplementary food, 1,381 metric tons of vegetable oil and 301 vehicles of various kinds[11]. The assistance received in the form of cash (from domestic public, voluntary and international organizations) came to Birr 9,125,298[12].

Among the immediate problems facing the Commission was the large quantity of relief grain that had accumulated in the ports and had to be moved immediately. Three stages were involved in the transfer of commodities to the areas of urgent need: first, bringing the grain from the ports to the various central distribution points, then getting the grain to the storage areas, and finally, transporting it to the needy in the most remote districts.[13] There were only a few trucks available to carry the relief grain out of Assab and to get it from the central stores to the final beneficiaries.

Bilateral sources and organizations donated money to the Commission to purchase heavy-transport vehicles and the need was so great that the Commission had to buy all the trucks that were on sale in the country. Donors were also asked to assist in purchasing and transporting vehicles from abroad. The need for quick deployment of the relief commodities forced the Commission to employ commercial transport to move the supplies from the ports to regional warehouses located along all-weather roads. As a result of concentrated work, the grain at the ports was cleared away within four months.

However, the terrain of Ethiopia is such that the construction of roads is very difficult, expensive and time-consuming. Distribution of relief items to remote areas therefore suffered setbacks as a result of the lack of roads and the shortage of vehicles. The Commission therefore requested donors to airlift four-wheel-drive vehicles to be used in the distribution effort. On behalf of Ethiopia, UNDRO requested assistance of this kind from Europe, and the United Kingdom immediately responded by sending 20 vehicles worth Birr 1,683,343. A further 25 trucks were provided by Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, the United States and the World Food Programme. Christian Aid, based in Britain, Diakonisches Werk of West Germany and other private agencies also contributed.[14]

Because overland transportation was such a major problem in most of the drought-stricken areas of northern Ethiopia, the Commission had to resort to air-drop operations, with assistance coming from bilateral sources, voluntary agencies and domestic organizations. Mercy Airlift of the USA and Ethiopian Airlines participated in these air-drops, as a result of which the lives of many Ethiopians in remote areas were undoubtedly saved.

Under the headline of 'Sorghum from Heaven to Isolated Areas', the *Ethiopian Herald* gave this account of airlift activities:

> Swedish Air-Relief, a relief programme to drought-affected areas in Ethiopia organized by Lutherhjalpen (Swedish Section of Lutheran World Federation) in cooperation with Swedish Save the Children Federation and Swedish Red Cross, has started operation. Chief of operation is Count

> Carl Gustaf Von Rosen, a well-known name in Ethiopia. From three small SAAB MFI-15 aeroplanes, the relief team is dropping different kinds of supplies (maize, sorghum, *teff*, etc.) to isolated villages.[15]

At the height of the drought, large numbers of people participated in the relief effort with enthusiasm and with the utmost dedication. Many of them not only gave their money and rendered their services, but also sacrificed their lives in the service of those who had fallen victim to the drought. A Swedish volunteer pilot, Mr Kristian Christensen, lost his life on 28 May 1974, when his plane crashed while transporting seeds and grain from Kombolcha to Tenta in Wello administrative region. Count Von Rosen, who was himself a pilot and who had distinguished himself as a champion of the campaign to save the lives of the people in the drought-affected areas of Ethiopia, coordinated most of the airlift and airdrop operations. He himself was later to be killed during a Somalian military attack on the south-eastern town of Gode in mid-1977.

In due course, the untiring and relentless efforts of Carl Gustaf Von Rosen resulted in the acquisition of a larger aircraft, a DC-3, and other light planes which led to the establishment of Air Mulla. This was the beginning of a strong and efficient RRC air transport system.

As the dimensions of the drought reached alarming proportions, many governmnts gave their support to the RRC in the distribution of relief items, particularly in the field of air transport. The French Air Contingent Unit in Djibouti was sent to air-drop items from helicopters to the drought victims in the inaccessible areas of Keffa administrative region. The RRC also used the services of *Transaal*, the military transport aircraft of the Federal Republic of Germany, to haul urgently needed supplies from Addis Ababa and Kombolcha to people in affected areas unreachable by road transport. Other governments which also gave air transport support in the distribution of relief items and in the assessment of the situation include those of the USA, the UK and Sweden.

Ethiopian public organizations and individuals also got involved in the transportation side of the operation, using in some cases pack animals. In one instance, the International Red Cross used camels in Wello to move 700 metric tons of grain 150 kilometres from storage points along the Addis Ababa-Asmara highway.[16]

When the Commission started its work, the supply of relief items depended mainly on public participation at regional and national levels. But relief items were also being distributed on an individual

Top: Members of the Swedish Air Relief team in Ethiopia in 1974: Fr. V. Gunnar Haglund; Karl Skogsberg; Kristian Christensen; Carl Gustaf von Rosen; and Sven Eric Larsson.

Above: The late C.G. von Rosen flying relief over the impassible north.

basis, and this entailed duplication and wastage of supplies. Greater coordination was required, and the RRC was able to reach 247,232 people in various drought-affected areas with a total of 72,153 metric tons of grains, 11,240 metric tons of supplementary food and 100,914 items of clothing within six months.[17]

A very important aspect of the relief operation was the provision of health services to disaster-affected people. The office of the medical coordinator in the RRC established a system for the regular collection of information from the areas concerned, regarding health conditions and the nutritional status of the people.[18] This information was needed to design programmes of emergency medical and nutritional relief assistance. An inter-governmental working group, with representatives from the Ethiopian Nutrition Institute (ENI), the Ministry of Public Health, the Extension and Programme Implementation Department of the Ministry of Agriculture (EPID) and major support from UNICEF, was involved in this operation.[19] A survey of the nutritional and agricultural status of the people conducted by ENI in Wello and by the UK's Oxfam in Tigrai, and other surveys made in other regions, gave the Commission new insights into the nature of the people's needs. The efforts of these and other institutions and teams was greatly enhanced by the arrival of multinational Red Cross personnel (British, Australian, New Zealanders and Swedish, to name but some); likewise, the UN through its various agencies, set up camps in selected areas and began treating patients.[20]

Shortage of manpower was one of the major constraints on the RRC during the first phase of its activities. The Commission initially started its enormous tasks with only six staff members, working from a two-room office under difficult conditions. But the extent of the problem was much too complicated to be adequately handled by so small an establishment, and the Commission had to draw staff from government and private institutions to fulfil its enormous responsibilities effectively.

News of the famine and the efforts made by the Ethiopian Government to combat the disaster also attracted the attention of various volunteers inside and outside the country. 'By mid-June 1974, the Commission had more than thirty staff members and several foreign experts, plus a number of Peace Corps volunteers, working for it'.[21]

Various Ethiopian government ministries and specialized agencies worked side by side with the Commission during the relief operations.

These included the Ministries of Public Health, Interior and Education, and members of the armed forces and the police. As the Commission was not a well-knit organization during its first few months of operation, it had to appoint representatives to work for it on a part-time basis. These representatives were recruited mainly from the Ministries of Education, Interior and Community Development. Schools, as well as international and voluntary organizations, were also among those that participated in the first phase of the RRC's relief activities.

In July 1974, roughly five months after the Commission began work, the first organizational chart was designed, positions classified, and the RRC started placing its staff accordingly.

The severity of the drought demanded, among other things, more detailed participation on the part of international donors, organizations, and individuals if the programme was to be carried out successfully. According to Shimelis Adugna, the first Commissioner of the RRC, an estimated 5,000 people from various organizations and all walks of life were seconded to distribute, supervize and manage relief operations. Besides supplying relief aid, foreign relief organizations and domestic ones also participated actively in various activities to restore people to some semblance of normality. At the time of the 1974 drought, some 40 organizations were working in Wello alone.

As a result of the huge effort made by the Ethiopian people and Government and the world community at large to alleviate the plight of the hungry people, many lives were saved and the famine was gradually brought under control. By the latter half of 1974, the situation in the highland regions had greatly improved. The rains came in adequate quantities during that time and short-term rehabilitation programmes in the form of distribution of loan seeds and plough oxen began. Nevertheless, the relief operations still continued in the highlands and also in the lowland areas which had been hit by a drought that followed closely on the heels of the disaster in Wello, Tigrai and northern Shewa.

Rehabilitation Programmes

Carrying out rehabilitation work, as opposed to relief operations, implies measures planned or undertaken to address the causes of famine and other hardships that follow in the wake of natural calamities. The major emphasis during the first phase of RRC's operations was on relief assistance. However, some general rehabilitative measures were launched to prevent the recurrence of famine. Steps were taken by the Government to make the drought-stricken people, both in the highlands and the lowlands, self-supporting. Rehabilitation programmes were also planned in areas where serious environmental deterioration over the years had reduced the fertility of the land. As the UN Environment Programme makes clear, 'drought itself does not create deserts. It simply speeds up their formation and accentuates existing problems. Instead, it is man's over-cropping and over-grazing of the land that starts the process and prevents the desert's retreat when the rains eventually return.'[22] To achieve its objectives, the Commission, in collaboration with foreign governments and donor organizations, undertook three types of rehabilitation programmes.

First, short-term projects included the distribution of seeds, fertilizers and oxen (usually on a credit basis) to agricultural areas, and the restocking of cattle in the nomadic regions. Secondly, medium-term projects associated with food-for-work programmes, primarily involving soil and water conservation and the construction of rural roads, as well as afforestation programmes, surface-water conservation, well rehabilitation and drilling, and the setting up of grain storage facilities. The third type of rehabilitation embodied long-term development projects mainly concerned with range management schemes, land-improvement efforts, irrigation and water development, rural road master-planning and construction, and settlement schemes.

The aforementioned set of measures specifically focused on the highland agricultural areas of Wello, Tigrai, northern Shewa and Harerge where the largest concentration of stricken people was found. The lowland pastoral and marginal agricultural regions of Harerge, Bale, Sidamo, Gamo Gofa, Wello, Tigrai, and Eritrea and the under-populated and under-developed regions, primarily in the southern half of the country, also benefited from rehabilitation programmes.

Projects catering for the people in these areas were promoted and supported by the Commission which provided financial assistance. Rehabilitation activities in the first phase mainly concentrated on short-term and, to some extent, on medium-term projects such as the distribution of seed, oxen and the construction of rural roads through food-for-work programmes.[23]

In the short-term recovery programme, farmers were supplied with draught-oxen, seeds, insecticides, agricultural implements and other agricultural supplies. Some 28,000 farmers who had lost all their draught-oxen and 185,000 farmers with no seeds were assisted.[24] About 58,000 farmers in Harerge administrative region also received seeds in May 1974.[25] EPID activities relating to short-term rehabilitation were explained in its report quoted by the *Ethiopian Herald* in these words:

> In 1974 the rehabilitation programmes directly executed by EPID include the following components:
>
> Seed distribution, crop protection, replacement of oxen, tractor ploughing services, small-scale soil and water conservation activities and supporting services. The total cost for these projects is estimated at Eth. Birr 24 million . . . 117 distribution centers were planned to be established, in Tigrai (25), Wello (40), Shewa (10) and Harerge (42), about 110 centers have been established . . . by mid-April (1974) about 10,000 farmers had received seed in Wello and about 15,000 in Harerge.
>
> About 2,500 farmers in Wello, and 40 farmers in Harerge, have received Eth. Birr 170 each for purchase of oxen. Other organizations have donated funds for the purchase of about 2,400 oxen in Wello.[26]

International and voluntary organizations donated cash and material assistance, not only for relief but also for rehabilitation purposes. One of the organizations which participated in the ongoing rehabilitation programme was the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD, the World Bank). The RRC's January 1975 report on drought rehabilitation in Wello and Tigrai gives the following information on this organization's involvement in rehabilitation:

> During February 1974, an IBRD mission visited several parts of the drought-stricken areas of Wello and Tigrai provinces with a view to formulating a programme of assistance by the World Bank for the rehabilitation and longer-term development of affected areas . . . As a result of this mission, approval for a $10 million loan was negotiated in record time by IBRD, and this loan was offered to the Ethiopian Government in June 1974, with the further prospect of another loan to cover the cost of projects that might arise from the first loan.[27]

The IBRD interest-free loan of Eth. Birr 20.7 million for the rehabilitation programme in Wello and Tigrai was transferred to the Ethiopian Government soon after the mission's recommendation. The following table shows the allocation of part of the World Bank loan during the early years of the RRC's operations.

TABLE 5
Allocation of Part of the Loan by Type of Activity/Project

Type of Activity/Project	Budget (Eth.Birr)
Equipment for rural roads and maintenance	1,520,000
Equipment and technical assistance for rural water development	1,500,000
North-East Range development	1,400,000
Wello settlement programme	1,050,000
Project preparation and research	240,000
Surveys and data collection and planning in Welega and Illubabor to serve as basis for settlement and resettlement in Wello and Tigrai regions where possible	360,000
Research on peasant farming systems by the Institute of Agricultural Research	550,000
Cottage industries	180,000
Health centres	800,000
Contingency	2,450,000
Total	**10,050,000**

Source: *Addis Zemen* (an Amharic daily), 29 May 1966 (E.C.).

The Commission also provided funds and resources to various implementing agencies involved in rehabilitation activities. Until August 1974, the total of funds forwarded to such agencies by the Commission was Birr 4,174,243. The details are shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6
RRC's Implementing Agencies and Funds Forwarded

Organization	Amount given (Birr)
Awash Valley Authority	46,000
Ethiopian Highway Authority	1,000,000
E.P.I.D.	2,000,000
Ministry of Agriculture and Settlement	500,000
University Famine Relief and Rehabilitation Organization (UFRRO)	75,000
E.S.B.U.	488,000
Haile Selassie I Foundation	65,000
Total	**4,174,000**

Source: RRC, Finance Department report, 1978, in files of Planning, Programme and Budgeting Services.

CHAPTER 5

A TWO-PRONGED RESPONSE TO NATURAL CALAMITIES: THE SECOND PHASE OF THE RRC'S ACTIVITIES SEPTEMBER 1974-AUGUST 1977

AS early as autumn 1973, British and European journalists were reporting the famine conditions in Ethiopia to the international community. On the domestic front, the Ethiopian public was horrified when Dimbleby's documentary film of the victims of famine was broadcast on Ethiopian Television on 11 September, 1974.

This turned out to be a historic period for it was on 12 September, 1974 that the age-old monarchical rule in Ethiopia came to an abrupt end. As Raul Valdes Vivo observes in *Ethiopia's Revolution:* 'The Emperor was not moved by the scenes on TV; with regard to his money he merely pointed out that he had appointed his son heir to his fortune, and that it was impossible for an Emperor to retract. "I'm really sorry," he said'.[1] On 12 September, at 7.30 a.m., the framers of the new social order carried out the legal overthrow of the monarch who was the embodiment of the oppressive system. A new era of hope

TABLE 7
Number of Drought-Affected People by Administrative Region
(July 1975)

Administrative Region	Affected Population
Wello	400,000
Tigrai	400,000
Harerge	500,000
Shewa	200,000
Gamo Gofa	200,000
Sidamo	200,000
Bale	213,000
Eritrea	500,000
Kefa	11,000
Illubabor	20,000
Wellega	10,000
Arssi	10,000
Total	**2,664,000***

* Addis Ababa, Gojam and Begemdir are not included.
Source: RRC, *RRC 1.5 Years*, September 13, 1975, p.10.

and possibility began when the imperial regime was overthrown and the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC) came to power. It was then that the dimensions of the drought and its grim consequences began to unfold. The drought was believed in 1974 to have affected something like 3 million people in eight administrative regions. But by mid-1975, it was clear that some 2,664,000 Ethiopians had been affected by the calamity in the highland regions alone. The drought's geographical impact is indicated in Table 7, which contains data registered by the RRC in September 1975.

As a result of this more detailed information, more serious attention was given by the Revolutionary Government, not only to the immediate needs of the victims, but also to the taking of long-term precautions against similar disasters in the future. Indeed, the arrival on the political scene of the Revolutionary Government marked a totally different approach to the problem. For the first time in our long history, anti-drought measures became systematic. In place of the earlier perfunctory attitude of the ruling class who had obviously never been touched by the people's suffering and were therefore never willing to become involved in any long-term solutions, the atmosphere was now palpably different. There was an awareness that Ethiopia's continued existence and honour depended on lifting the suffering people from their long-standing degradation and restoring to them their humanity and self-esteem.

Historians of the future may well see the drought of 1972-74 as the sorrowful setting from which a new society began to emerge. That drought was the catalyst that crystallized a nationwide anger, a defiant feeling that enough was enough, that henceforth the people's own needs would decide the framework for economic development. This anger also revealed that the subjective conditions were at last present for a modern society. By welcoming the overthrow of the self-seeking monarchy, the people at large had given their consent for the restructuring of social relations along more liberal and productive lines.

An order was issued by the Government to enhance the authority and the means of the RRC to carry out its responsibilities. Order No. 93/1974 also redefined the main objectives and functions of the RRC, as follows:[2]

1. To coordinate the relief and rehabilitation activities of Government and voluntary agencies in the drought-affected areas of Ethiopia;
2. To act as a focal point for all offers, and to receive all deliveries, of assistance for the affected areas;

3. To arrange, according to need, the distribution of relief assistance provided by both internal and external sources to these areas;
4. To help the provincial relief authorities and voluntary agencies to carry out their programmes; and
5. To prepare short-term rehabilitation projects for consideration by foreign donor agencies.

To strengthen the relationship between the RRC and the provincial and local administrations and to facilitate the management of aid mobilization and distribution, the then Commissioner of the RRC, Shimelis Adugna, issued on 25 January 1975 instructions for the establishment of functional committees at the *kiflehager, awraja* and *wereda* levels in the 14 administrative regions. In the same directive, he called for the full and active involvement of government ministries and departments, provincial administration and the local populace.[3] This initiative was followed by directives and guidelines from the RRC on dispensing aid and on streamlining the activities of the Commission at field level. Later, an increasing number of Government organizations seconded field personnel at the regional, *awraja* or *wereda* levels for the Commission's operations. Some also assigned part of their manpower specifically for the work of the Commission on a permanent basis.

The Ministries of Education, Labour and Social Affairs, Interior and Agriculture (through EPID) assigned the bulk of their manpower to participate in the activities of the RRC. Members of the armed forces, including the Army, the Police and the Air Force, continued to play a crucial role in the distribution of grain and other relief supplies. Some organizations donated money to the Commission to employ staff to carry out its services. Worth mentioning also is the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia which generously contributed about Birr 269,940 towards payment of salaries for two years for some 20 Commission employees.[4] 'Something much more intense than a flame must have kindled in the soul of the Ethiopians,' is how Valdes Vivo described the way people rose to the challenge.

An unforgettable impression was also made by those individuals who gave their hearts, minds and dedicated service to various aspects of the RRC's activities. We acknowledge again the selflessness of those who sacrificed their lives in the service of the drought victims and place on record our profound gratitude, appreciation and respect. Amongst these noble people were Lieutenant Dawit Haileab of the Ethiopian Air Force, the Swedish pilot Mr Kristian Christansen, the

Australian physician Dr. Douglas Hill (of the Society of International Missionaries), the Chinese physician Dr. Mie-Kang, Sergeant Sultan Ahmed of the 4th Division of the Army, and the girl pupils of Menen School, Tsehainesh Balcha and Aster Mengesha.

Surtax, Budget and Increased Powers

An energetic campaign was launched to publicize the drought and its aftermath in the domestic and international media. This brought positive responses from the Ethiopian public and the international community by way of generous relief supplies and other assistance to reduce the dangers created by the drought.

A significant step to strengthen the Commission's resources was taken by the PMAC when it empowered the RRC, by law Order No. 36/75, to collect a surtax levied on the salaries of all employed Ethiopians. The law required every Ethiopian earning Birr 250 or more per month to contribute one month's salary towards the objectives of the Commission, payable in equal instalments over a 12-month period. This practice has continued to the present day and includes newly employed personnel. Between September 1975 and August 1977 alone, the Commission received Birr 34,712,598.36 by this means.[5]

Additionally, for the first time since its establishment in mid-1974, the RRC was given a budget. In the four-year period 1974-1977, the Government of Ethiopia earmarked an emergency fund of Birr 40 million for the Commission's purposes. This amount does not, however, include the Birr 40,598,984 the Government contributed towards administrative and operational expenses including wages and salaries, which would bring the total to more than Birr 80 million.[6] Concomitant with this, a series of special powers were granted to the Commission to enable it to carry out its mission effectively. These included powers to:

- directly administer parts of the country declared disaster areas;
- make use of the services of any personnel, property, budget and equipment of any Government office where it seems necessary for the proper performance of its duties;
- obtain priority over all other activities of all Government offices[7].

Furthermore, the Government extended to the Commission special duty-free privileges, exempting all goods and services destined for the disaster victims from any taxes.

The Early Warning System

In the early days of its establishment, it was realised that the Comission's ability to act effectively in conditions of natural disaster could be enhanced by a prior state of readiness concerning knowledge of areas and numbers of people likely to be affected by food shortages, and a corresponding build up of stocks of food from the major food donors to cover all possible eventualities. In order to fulfil the former objective, the Early Warning System was established in 1976 with the purpose of informing all its possible users, including Government and donors, of impending food shortages after the *Belg* and *Meher* harvests.

The concept of a food supply system, i.e. the chain of events that lead from production to consumption, was central to the design and analysis of the Early Warning System; the three food supply systems identified in Ethiopia were crop dependent, market dependent and livestock dependent, with some groups of people depending on more than one of these systems. The activity of the EWS focuses on the identification of the major indicators which determine food availability in these three food supply systems, and the monitoring of the performance of these indicators over time so that failure could be detected as early as possible.

The RRC had assistance in the establishment of the Early Warning System from UNICEF, USAID and SIDA in the main, with some assistance from the UK-ODA. The System has been operating up to the present, playing a central role in the RRC's activities, and parts of its functions are still being funded by UNICEF.

Relief Operations in the Second Half of the 1970s

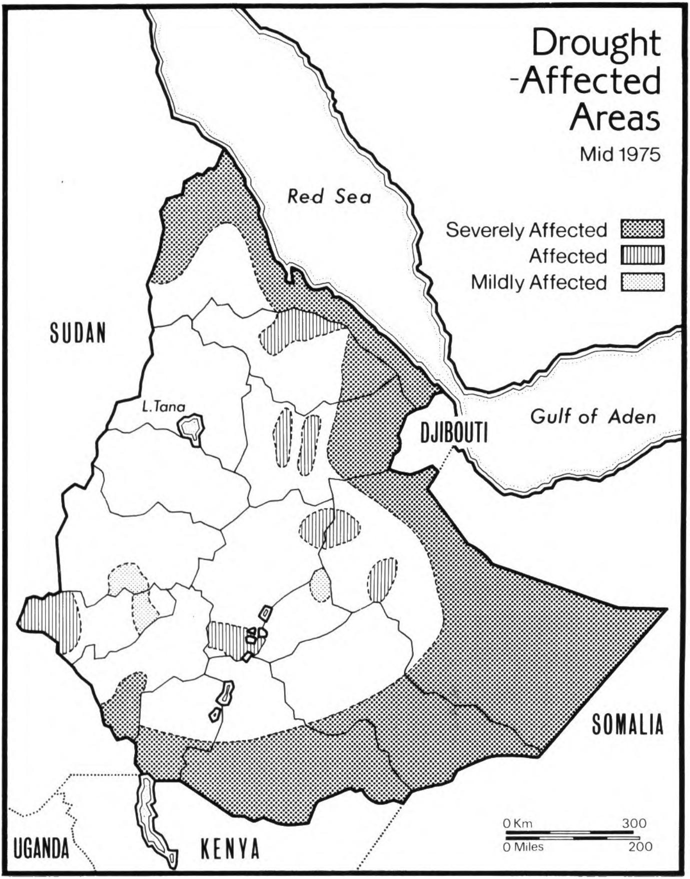
The RRC was not alone in combatting the drought of the second half of the 1970s. In the seven Ogaden *awrajas* of Harerge administrative region, branch offices were established, personnel assigned, stores, health and feeding centres built, transport vehicles deployed and other facilities mobilized. Grain, fortified food, clothing and potable water had to be distributed from over 20 relief centres in the Ogaden, where the population had lost an average of 60 per cent of their domestic animals.[8]

The RRC, along with its partners, the Ethiopian Nutrition Institute, World Vision International, Oxfam, the Society of International Missionaries, the Catholic Secretariat, and other agencies, carried out anti-famine and intensive feeding programmes for breast-feeding mothers, for the undernourished and for the extremely weak, while nine Ethiopian Red Cross and Commission mobile teams provided medical services. Students from the Development Through Cooperation Campaign also assisted in the Commission's life-saving programmes. Over 300,000 people, including the 100,000-plus shelter population of the Ogaden, were given food, aid and comfort all over Harerge. The RRC's relief work stemmed the tide of tragedy in the Ogaden where 15 to 20 people had been dying every day.

Conditions in Bale, the low-lying areas of Elkere in particular, were not very different. This region had to face the grim consequences of years without rain; what scanty vegetation still growing was at risk from brush fires, and the herds were dying. The victims were systematically fed, the ill were attended to by the two mobile medical teams, and most families were supplied with household items. Members of international organizations such as the Swedish and Norwegian Save the Children Federations, Irish Concern, Catholic Relief Services and UNICEF worked alongside the Commission in these life-saving operations.

The RRC, with its other operational partner, UFRRO, carried out similar relief programmes for the drought victims of Arero and Borena *awrajas* of Sidamo administrative region. There were five mobile medical teams operating in Sidamo during the period. In Gamo Gofa it was the Philadelphia Church Mission that assisted the Government's anti-famine efforts, particularly in the remote areas of Bume and Kelem, while Mercy Airlift of the USA deployed its DC-3 aircraft to haul urgently needed goods to remote locations in Bale, Sidamo and Gamo Gofa.

The central and northern parts of the country were in no way exempt from the severe drought that took hold in the second half of the 1970s. Special feeding programmes reaching about 2,700 children were started in the Hossana area of Kembata and in the Hadiya *awraja* of Shewa region, 250 kilometres due south of Addis Ababa, the nation's capital. The Society of International Missionaries, the


Drought
-Affected
Areas
Mid 1975
Red Sea
Severely Affected
Affected
Mildly Affected
SUDAN
L. Tana
DJIBOUTI
Gulf of Aden
SOMALIA
UGANDA
KENYA
0 Km
300
0 Miles
200

Catholic Secretariat, and Seventh Day Adventist Mission, the Evangelical Church, Makane Yesus, and the RRC continued their relief efforts to avert a catastrophe which would otherwise most certainly have had far more devastating effects.

Army-worm, locusts, other pests and hailstorms seemed to have joined forces with the drought to keep Tigrai, in the north, in a state of ecological ruin. The failure of the rains, particularly in the eastern part of Tigrai administrative region, had resulted in heavy animal losses. The population had to rely on the relief and assistance from the RRC, Oxfam, the Society of International Missionaries, the Catholic Secretariat, the Christian Relief and Development Association, SOS Kinderdorf, other voluntary agencies, UNICEF, and domestic groups such as students, teachers, government employees and other individuals. Something like 500,000 people in the area were assisted through this programme.

Further south, in Wello, the drought was particularly hard on the Afar community of Awsa and on those residing along the coast of the Red Sea. Herds of cattle, sheep, goats and camels were decimated when the rains failed to come. Ponds and earth dams lost their water to the blazing sun while the level of the wells fell lower and lower during that period. Programmes for the distribution of drinking water had to be drawn up and implemented by the Commission along the Lower Awash-Assab-Bati roads. Grain, fortified food and other goods as well as medical services were taken to the needy people of Wello from the RRC distribution centres and other localities, thus keeping the human misery well below what was experienced in 1972-74.

About Birr 121,000,000 was obtained between 1975 and 1977 from the international community and domestic sources, all of which was used directly to benefit the 3 million drought-affected people. During the same period about 86,037 metric tons of grain, 3,773 metric tons of supplementary food and 2,250 metric tons of vegetable oil were received by the RRC, but, as often reiterated, this aid, welcome though it was, fell far short of what was needed. For instance, while the affected population's grain requirement was 837,000 metric tons, what was actually received from bilateral sources – by far the major source of grain – was only 10.3 per cent of this, or 92,000 metric tons over the three-year period. (The contributions of international organizations such as the FAO and WFP and voluntary agencies are incorporated in the assistance figures given in value terms in their respective sections.) In terms of supplementary food, too, there were similar disparities. The amount obtained in this category was 3,773 metric tons – only 4.5 per cent of the 84,000 metric tons required. For the entire 1975-77 period, the gap between what was needed and what was obtained remained very wide. These continuous deficiencies in supplies were the single most important brake on the RRC's activities.

The amount of grain was computed on the basis of 125 grams per day per person for age-group 0-10 years, 250 grams per day per person for age group 11-14 years, 500 grams for the drought-affected population and 700 grams for man-made-disaster victims per person per day for the age group 15 and above. In terms of supplementary feeding, the calculation was done on the basis of 100 grams per person per day for the age group of 0-14 years. For butter-oil, the amount was 5 grams per person per day for the age group 0-10 years, 10 grams for the age group 10-14 years, and 10 grams per person per day for the age group 15 years and above.

Rehabilitation Programmes

As a result of the aforementioned measures the massive death rate caused by the drought was controlled and then reduced significantly. Alongside the intensification of relief operations, short-term (2-3 years) and medium-term (5-6 years) rehabilitation programmes and schemes were launched. Numerous rehabilitation efforts in Wello, Harerge and Bale administrative regions were already under way; here the RRC and many other organizations were engaged in replacing lost livestock, providing seeds and farming implements and helping the local people to become productive again. This tended to be the approach adopted by the RRC in all the areas concerned: it would start the self-sufficiency programmes by distributing seeds, oxen and other agricultural inputs. This had the effect also of boosting the peasants' morale, of showing that their well-being was regarded as important.

The RRC channelled, through EPID, Birr 5,199,208 for the purchase of about 13,000 metric tons of seeds to be provided free of charge to farmers in Wello, Tigrai, Harerge, Sidamo and Bale administrative regions. The operational cost of administering this programme was estimated at Birr 1.1 million.[9]

Of the Birr 17,700,000 aid obtained for rehabilitation from domestic and international sources, Birr 4,990,930 was used to buy plough-oxen for the farmers. The breakdown is presented in Table 8.[10]

TABLE 8
Number of Plough Oxen and Seed Distribution to Farmers (EPID)

Administrative Region	Plough Oxen Distributed to Farmers	Seed (metric tons)
Wello	12,863	5,127
Tigrai	9,452	3,468
Harerge	1,062	3,924
Shewa	498	2,094
Sidamo	484	149
Begemdir (Gonder)	–	125
Total	**24,359**	**14,887**

Source: RRC, *RRC 1.5 Years*, p.33.

Furthermore, about Birr 6,390,404 was given out in the form of farm credits and for the purchase of materials and equipment such as irrigation pumps and well-drilling rigs and vehicles.[11] This did not include the RRC's contribution of about Birr 4 million to the Rapid Farms Projects started in Deddessa, Welketie, Fincha and other areas. The most notable venture in this regard was the Assayita Rapid Farms project initiated by the RRC.

It is estimated that about 3 million head of cattle, and more than 2.5 million goats, sheep and camels perished in the drought mainly in the arid and semi-arid areas of the affected regions. With the cooperation of the National Meat Board, the RRC allotted about Birr 3 million for the digging of wells and construction of earth-dams to help reduce the water shortages and to improve the transport infrastructure and market facilities in these hard-hit areas.

Agriculture

The RRC was well aware that the highland areas of Ethiopia, including northern Wello, Tigrai and Eritrea, had been subjected to longer periods of destructive land use than elsewhere. As a result, pilot projects to carry out intensive programmes of soil conservation and forestry were called for in order to bolster the small but important effort in environmental rehabilitation taking place in affected areas. In this regard, more than 7,000,000 seedlings of forest trees were planted in

Wello and Tigrai, and terracing was done in areas covering hundreds of kilometres, mainly through the food-for-work programme.[12]

Of particular significance in the agricultural development programmes undertaken by the RRC were the starting of the Rapid Farms programmes. These were intended to be agricultural/settlement programmes using mechanised technology to grow badly needed food grain and at the same time to provide an economic base for new settlements. The largest and most important were the Deddessa Valley State Farm and settlements in Welega, and other projects at Welketie, Metekel, Gewani, Fincha, Gojeb and Chaffa.[13]

Other concrete and long-term rehabilitation activities have also been undertaken by the RRC. The major projects of this kind for the Wello and Tigrai highland areas funded by various agencies and foreign governments were:

1. Master Plan for Wello and Tigrai (World Bank), 'Drought Rehabilitation in Wello and Tigrai'.[14]
2. 'Central Tigrai Development Study' (British Ministry of Overseas Development), Land and Water Resources Study.
3. Raya and Kobo Regional Development Project (Federal Republic of Germany).
4. Lower Addi Abbo Project in Tigrai (the settlement of 12,000 farmers in this lowland region from the highlands of Tigrai; World Bank).
5. The Master Plan for Water Development (Wello-Tigrai).
6. The Master Plan for Rural Roads Development (Wello).
7. Health Clinics (over 30 health centres were financed by donors in Wello and Tigrai).
8. Crafts/Small Industries (one centre has already been established; five others have been proposed and have received funding).

The lowland pastoral areas which were severely affected by the drought were also covered by the RRC's rehabilitation programmes. Lowland pastoral areas in the southern provinces of Harerge, Bale, Gamo Gofa and Sidamo, and north-eastern regions of Eritrea, Tigrai and Wello were to be rehabilitated through livestock replacement/development, the provision of watering points, improved grazing, roads, communications, animal health facilities, and development of river basins which would provide irrigation for agriculture and for livestock development.

The Livestock and Meat Board (LMB) had three development schemes all of which were designed to help alleviate the problems of these areas. The Northeast Rangelands Livestock Project, the Jijiga Livestock Project and the Southern Rangelands Project were intended to develop livestock resources from a subsistence level to one suitable for international marketing, and to control and upgrade pastures and livestock. As the conditions in lowland areas were very bad and still deteriorating, it was hoped that these projects would help, in the short term, to improve the situation and, in the long term, to stabilize it so that environmental problems like those in the past would not be as devastating in the future. The LMB projects were funded by the World Bank and the Ethiopian Government.

Besides these long-term projects, the creation of rural roads and of water-development programmes were also considered extremely important for these areas. Water resources development had already begun in Hararge and rural road development in Bale, Sidamo and Gamo Gofa. The development of major rivers was also a vital part of the rehabilitation of the lowland areas. The irrigation of land would make it possible to settle more families, for example in the schemes at Gode on the Wabe Shebelle, and at Amibara on the Awash river.

More than Birr 26 million was channelled by the RRC to various development projects *(see Table 9)*.

Continuing this practice of rehabilitating drought-hit areas by means of multi-faceted schemes, the RRC channelled a total of Birr 4,069,528.61 to implementing agencies between 1974 and the end of 1977.[15]

Shortage of water for human consumption, for agriculture and for the livestock population was one of the most serious problems in these regions. To help rescue the situation, the RRC constructed a total of 182 water wells, ponds and pilot irrigation projects in the eight affected administrative regions of the country (*See Table 10*).

Voluntary agencies and other domestic organizations have helped significantly in the development of surface water systems and the drilling and digging of wells. Oxfam partially funded a study of surface water development in Wello and Tigrai and funded the construction of many similar schemes. Also involved in the development of surface water programmes were *Stern* magazine, particularly through the untiring efforts of Peter-Hannes Lehmann, and UFRRO, UNICEF, Norwegian Church Relief and EPID. Funds and drilling equipment were provided by UNICEF, Lutheran World Federation and Swiss Disaster Relief. A well-rehabilitation programme funded by USAID was carried out in Hararge[16].

TABLE 9
Rehabilitation Expenditure Channelled from RRC Accounts (November 1973-Mid-September 1975)

Implementing Organizations	Amount in Birr
Water Resources Commission	1,997,520.82
Re-establishment of the Disabled, Wello and Tigrai	67,975.00
Redevelopment of Wello and Tigrai	1,534,960.01
Ministry of Agriculture and EPID	6,390,403.95
Ethiopian School Building Unit (ESBU) and Rehabilitation Agency (for shelters)	762,391.00
Awash Valley Settlement	5,412,000.00
Institute of Agricultural Research	3,506,223.15
Livestock and Meat Board	2,827,062.00
Ethiopian Nutrition Institute	140,000.00
Ministry of Land Reform	240,000.00
Highway Authority	2,265,000.00
Forestry Department (Ministry of Agriculture)	105,000.00
Others	88,332.63
Total	26,316,868.56

Source: RRC, *RRC 1.5 Years*, p.30.

TABLE 10
Water Wells and Pilot Irrigation Schemes Constructed by RRC (1975-1979)

Administrative Region	Ponds	Wells	Pilot Irrigation
Harerge	20	9	9
Tigrai	20	8	24
Wello	16	2	–
Gamo Gofa	3	–	6
Bale	2	–	6
Shewa	5	1	10
Eritrea	–	2	–
Sidamo	18	10	11
Total	84	32	66

Source: RRC, *RRC 1.5 Years*, p.35, and *RRC's Activities During the Last Ten Years*, p.27.

Much of the finance and aid for these projects came from an IDA credit as well as from UNICEF, USAID and other donors, including the Catholic Secretariat, World Vision and others.[17] These tasks were undertaken by the National Water Resources Commission under the sponsorship of the RRC and the total value of the projects came to Birr 3,136,471.82.[18]

Rural Roads Programmes

The lack of an adequate rural-road infrastructure was one of the most serious obstacles hampering the relief effort, especially in Wello. It made the distribution of aid to affected areas extremely difficult. Hence, the construction of rural roads was an important priority, especially in the least accessible regions of Wello, Tigrai and Harerge.

The RRC was again not alone in this venture. Foreign governments and agencies were actively involved in the endeavour. In Wello alone, about 1,000 kilometres of rural roads were built or improved with the cooperation of the British Government (Crown Agents), the Government of the Netherlands, *Stern* magazine, the Livestock and Meat Board, Terre des Hommes of Lausanne, World Bank, EPID, the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and the University Famine Relief and Rehabilitation Organization.[19]

Almost all of these programmes were managed through food-for-work projects. At one time, it was estimated that between 10,000 and 15,000 people were engaged in food-for-work programmes, mostly road construction projects. In Tigrai and Eritrea, where the road situation was relatively better, road programmes, especially food-for-work, were established by the RRC in conjunction with the World Food Programme, the World Bank, EPID and the Catholic Secretariat. At the same time, the World Bank lent money for the procurement of capital equipment, two road construction units, and technical assistance. These were used to build 400-500 kilometres of roads in Wello and Tigrai over the following three years.

In the southern regions of Bale, Harerge, Sidamo and Gamo Gofa, USAID funded the building of 800 kilometres of roads and the Ethiopian Government of another 312 kilometres. With an EPID food-for-work programme in highland Harerge it was possible to build 100 kilometres of roads.[20] All in all, an estimated 3,600 kilometres of roads were either newly built or upgraded by the Commission. In money terms, the RRC alone contributed more than Birr 7.4 million for this purpose.[21]

Roads, water conservation, tree planting, terracing, distribution of oxen and seeds and the building of health centres were not, however, the only self-help schemes and rehabilitation projects that the RRC saw through to completion in the affected parts of the country. Many additional reconstruction programmes including the rehabilitation of orphaned and abandoned children and other destitute people were also undertaken by the Commission.

Children's Programmes

The following account of the RRC's activities and programmes relating to children, unless otherwise stated, is taken from a report dated April 1976 prepared by the Children's Department of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission.[22]

The RRC dealt with the problems of children who had lost their parents as a result of the drought by establishing a Children's Relief and Rehabilitation Coordinating Office. This office started its work by defining the policies and procedures that were to be followed by any unit involved in the relief and rehabilitation of children affected by the drought. By August 1977, the RRC succeeded in reuniting 875 children in Wello with their families.

The Office started its programme of family reunification in cooperation with the Christian Relief Committee and the Evangelical Church, Makane Yesus. Between June 1974 and March 1975, it was able to reunite 150 children and discharged about the same number of children with their parents or relatives from the Alamata Relief Shelter with the necessary rehabilitative assistance. Moreover, the guardians of 62 out-shelter children were also given assistance at that time.

Through the Children's Programme about 716 children were reunited with their families between May 1975 and January 1976. The RRC, in collaboration with other humanitarian organizations, had instituted several significant measures to help children who could not be put in touch with their families. In 1975, a total of 569 had still not been returned to their families. Of these, 392 had lost their parents and all of their relatives during the famine. Their parents might either have died or migrated to unknown places between 1973 and 1974. The parents and relatives of the remaining 194 were, however, contacted. Nevertheless, it was impossible to reunite them owing to physical and mental handicaps, unwillingness to support children because of poverty which could not be overcome with the assistance which the RRC was able to provide, or for other reasons. Amongst these children, 20 had brothers and sisters, 11 had grandparents and 50 had other relatives such as aunts, uncles and cousins, in the villages of their birth.

All children whose family reunification was not possible were subsequently placed in various institutions and organizations as shown in Table 11.

Furthermore, on the RRC's initiative, the National Community Development and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church housed 50 children each in Addis Ababa, and the Catholic Secretariat housed 46 in Guder.[23] One outcome of the RRC's wide-ranging support programmes for children was the opening in Wello of the Dessie Paediatric Hospital, only the second of its kind in the country. With assistance from donors and operational funds provided by the RRC, this institution rendered a great service to the unfortunate children of Wello whose families had been destroyed by the drought, before it was turned over to the Ministry of Public Health.

TABLE 11
Children in Care

Names of Institutions/Status	Number of Children
Jarre Children's Village	392
YMCA Bati, Wello region	80
Wuchale Agricultural Training Centre	550
Various boarding schools in Addis Ababa and Dessie	17
Adopted	5
Employed by Crown Agents as rural road constructors	2
Kobo Catholic Mission	15
Further medical care abroad	3

Source: Mekuria Bulcha, *Final Report on Children's Relief and Rehabilitation in the Drought-Affected Regions of Wello*, Dessie, April 1976.

The Jarre Children's Village in Wello, built with aid from Terre des Hommes of Lausanne and the West German Government, cared for about 3,000 orphaned children during this period.

Top: One of the outcomes of the RRC's wide-ranging support programmes for children was the opening in Wello of the Dessie Paediatric Hospital, only the second of its kind in the country. Here Project Co-ordinator Dr. Tamrat Retta receives a donation from the Lycee Gebre Mariam Alumni Association.

Above: Mrs Stina Lundgren (centre) and her physician husband were responsible for mobilising Scandinavian assistance for the hospital. Erna Trolle (left), with her Ethiopian child, was the Manager of the Jarre Children's Village for more than 10 years.

A similar, but larger and more adequately equipped centre was built in Tigrai with the help of SOS-Kinderdorf International. At its inception, this centre provided assistance for about 30 children who had lost their parents to the drought, and later expanded its services to accommodate 300 children.

In the Jarre and Tigrai centres, the children are given both vocational training and an academic education to enable them to be self-supporting. The RRC built an elementary school nearby in which Jarre Village children and others from surrounding areas are prepared for life in the countryside.

The Wuchale Training Centre, on the other hand, financed by the RRC and the Evangelical Church, Makane Yesus, graduated 50 boys and 10 farmer families after 10 months of vocational training in agriculture, animal husbandry, poultry, and woodwork and metalwork. The training continued with another group of young adolescents bettween 15 and 18 years old, who were eventually to be settled on land they would farm themselves.

Another centre that trained adolescents in various vocational skills was the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) through its Bati programme. The Bati YMCA had about 80 boys and girls involved in woodwork, basketry, weaving, sewing, poultry, and other skills. The centre, which was also caring for about 38 Afar children, had started its activities with 250 destitute children, 180 of whom were subsequently reunited with their parents through the RRC's Children's Programme.

The Gothenburg Posten Orphan Relief Fund (GORF) helped 11 children from Wello to continue their education in a boarding school in Addis Ababa. By 1976, GORF had spent Birr 5,500 on these children and had made a commitment to help the members of the group until they finished their academic training. Four children who lost their sight were sent by the RRC to schools for the blind in the country.

The Catholic Secretariat which had built a children's home in Kobo helped 15 children by providing them with shelter, food, clothing and education. This home was built to accommodate between 40 and 50 boys aged between seven and 14 years. Four children under the age of two years were sent abroad for adoption: three by Swedish families and the fourth by Danish parents. A Ghanaian family residing in Addis Ababa adopted a two-year-old child.

As we have indicated, 1,362 children were assisted and rehabilitated by the RRC and other organizations, 793 of whom were subsequently reunited with their parents and given rehabilitative assistance, while 569 were put in various institutions for long-term rehabilitation. Moreover, thousands of children were given nutritional and medical assistance in the shelters through various national and international organizations. During this period the problems of destitute and solitary children in general were substantially reduced in Wello.

Other Constructive Work

The RRC even organized craft and small-scale industries as part of its rehabilitation efforts. These programmes were primarily aimed at displaced women with children who were widowed by the drought and were ill-equipped to return to agricultural life. The first project to be established was the Alamata Women's Craft Centre in Wello, funded by a number of voluntary agencies, including Christian Aid and Help the Aged (UK). The World Bank allocated money for the development of a number of other similar projects, including the Agricultural Implements Industry in Mekele and the Women's Cooperative in Adigrat. The funds were contributed by Christian Relief and Development Association and Concern. Simultaneously, the Rehabilitation Agency for the Disabled established a cottage industry in Ambasel (Wello) to provide work for 350 single-parent families.

Stores of food are crucially important if Ethiopia is to have reserves against future emergencies. In November 1974, the FAO conducted a survey to look into the possibility of setting up a national food security programme in Ethiopia and recommended the stockpiling of 60,000 metric tons within the country. Not until 1981/82, however, was this idea implemented, with the assistance of FAO and WFP, and an initial reserve donation of 12,000 metric tons. The initial target of the National Food Security Reserve was, however, 180,000 metric tons over the first three-year period, but lack of international interest and support has hardly raised the reserve stock beyond the initial donation. Additionally, the Ethiopian Government proposed an agricultural marketing scheme at an estimated cost of Birr 75.8 million.

The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission did not limit itself to relief and self-sufficiency activities in its efforts to help the disaster-hit people to help themselves. The RRC and its partners also ran seven settlements in six administrative regions. In all 17,414 settler families were involved in these programmes from mid-1975 to 1977, as Table 12 shows.

TABLE 12
Settler Family Distribution by Region

Regions	No. of Family Heads
Pastoralists in Wello	4,000
Pastoralists in Harerge	5,000
Highland areas of Wello	3,996
Shewa (S. Kembatta)	1,000
Gamo Gofa	2,232
Sidamo	486
Tigrai	700
Total	17,414

Source: *RRC Efforts, Achievements and Needs*, November 1976, p.3.

The biggest of the Government's settlement programmes for drought victims in the early years of the second half of the 1970s was the one in the Ogaden along the banks of the Wabe Shebelle river. By 1976 some 106,000 people had sought refuge in the Ogaden relief camps for up to two years. Inevitably, the morale of these people was steadily deteriorating and, at the same time, their continued presence was putting a considerable burden on the Commission's resources (assistance valued at Birr 1 million a day was being expended to sustain them.[24]

The RRC therefore decided to close these camps and embark on a programme of irrigation development using the waters of the Wabe Shebelle river. The scheme envisaged was large enough to settle all the Ogaden relief camp residents who wished to be rehabilitated. A little less than 30,000 were moved to the new settlement areas where their participation in the project included land preparation, construction, development of basic infrastructure and associated irrigation activities. Most of the 30,000 settlers had come from Gode, but there were also people from Degehabur, Misrak Gashamo, Aware, Dehoun, Kebri Dehar, Segeg and Degehamedo relief camps. The great achievement of this settlement was that it increased the production of food in the region concerned, with a surplus large enough to provide significant reserves against future famines, while simultaneously giving a reliable livelihood to a large number of destitute families, the members of which had previously been languishing in relief camps for two years.

The Wabe Shebelle irrigation settlement developed 5,000 hectares, including those of World Vision International, between 1975 and 1977 and did much to stabilise food production in this famine-prone area. The Ethiopian Government, along with certain donors – FAO/UNDP, USAID – and voluntary technical personnel from the West German Volunteer Service, Friends Service Council, Oxfam and Concern spent tens of millions of Birr on the Imi-Burkur Wabe Shebelle settlement projects. Domestically, the Ethiopian Airlines Employees Fund-Raising Committee alone contributed Birr 750,000 towards the settlement programmes for drought victims in the Ogaden. Other Ethiopian organizations also participated in these humanitarian programmes.

Regrettably, however, the hard work and good intentions of the Ethiopian Government and people, and of the international community, to assist the unfortunate people of the low-lying areas of Harerge were undermined by the invasion of Somalia's military forces in 1977 (reviewed in greater detail in Chapter 6). Water pumps were destroyed or looted, tractor garages and stores levelled by Somali bombardment, clinics, office buildings, schools, mills and other social amenities were damaged and put out of action. Those lucky enough to survive were either dispersed or taken against their will across the border into Somalia.

The other RRC irrigation settlement schemes were located along the Awash river. Through these schemes attempts were made to irrigate and develop arable land and implement settlement programmes for the Afar nomadic community. The Commission, via the Awash Valley Development Agency, prepared nearly 10,000 hectares of irrigated land for grazing, drilled seven water wells and settled nearly 900 families on 2,500 hectares of irrigated arable land.

An accelerated food production project on 3,000 hectares was also started in Assayita. Approximately Birr 10 million was spent by the Commission on water well programmes, on the building of new roads and the opening of trails in the Amibara, Alidege, Gewani, Dubti, Dite Bahri, and Assayita irrigated settlement and rangeland development schemes. Other agencies, with support from the RRC, also implemented more limited settlement programmes. These included the Golesha, Golina and Wuchale projects for drought victims of Wello and Melka Haloya-Dawa in Sidamo. The Ministry of Interior and the RRC had,

Top: Ogaden drought victims on their way to the resettlement areas.

Above: By making use of the irrigation potential of the Shebelle river, the resettlement projects in the Ogaden quickly reached self-sufficiency. The subsequent invasion of the region by Somalia's military forces in 1974, however, destroyed all that had been achieved.

moreover, launched similar settlement programmes in Genale-Dawa in Sidamo, while the LMB and the Ministry of National Community Development also had their own settlement programmes in other areas.

Reorganization of the RRC

When the call for urgent relief operations became to some extent less urgent after the death rate had been reduced dramatically, the RRC started an in-house 'spring-cleaning' and reorganization campaign. The purpose of this campaign was to render the Commission more efficient and better equipped to face up to the challenges of future droughts. This reorganization took place at a time when a shift in emphasis from emergency and short-term relief operations to long-term rehabilitation work had become imperative.

Aware that an organization such as the RRC has to be able to respond effectively at short notice to a crisis that could occur at any time, the Commission began recruiting more competent staff in 1976 with the result that it had 567 permanent members deployed with a minimum of overlap into a more streamlined network of responsibilities. Better organized branch and provincial offices were also set up in Wello, Tigrai, Eritrea, Sidamo, Gamo Gofa, Bale, Harerge and Shewa (Kembatta and Hadya *awraja*) administative regions.

The better to concentrate on the preventive and rehabilitative aspects of its responsibilities, the Commission opened new units, amalgamated certain departments, and established an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) equipped to cope with almost any disaster that could arise. The establishment of the Early Warning System (EWS), as noted above, which was designed to forecast natural calamities, and thus forestall subsequent disasters, was also added to the RRC's institutional structure at the same time. The EWS was required, moreover, to undertake soil and climate studies, to monitor rainfall patterns in the drought-prone areas of the country, and to make policy recommendations.

Branch and regional offices with more specific duties and responsibilities were organized in seven of the 14 administrative regions. Better and more competent personnel were appointed at this level on a permanent basis. By acting as liaison offices between headquarters and the field, these decentralised units greatly facilitated the work of the Commission. They made possible a better appreciation and understanding of the problems involved in implementing plans and programmes and thus contributed to the Commission's overall effectiveness. Having identified its weaknesses, the RRC then embarked on manpower training courses to fill the gaps in its expertise.

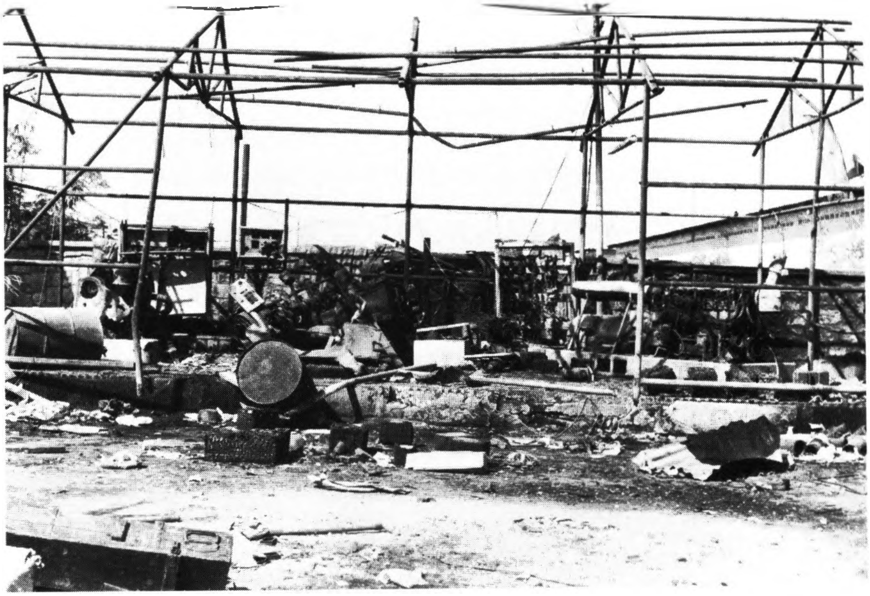
CHAPTER 6

EXPANDED RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE DUAL EFFECTS OF SOMALIA'S INVASION AND NATURAL CALAMITIES: THE THIRD PHASE OF RRC ACTIVITIES SEPTEMBER 1977-AUGUST 1979

BY September 1977, the effects of the drought in Ethiopia had been partially mitigated. With generous donations from local people coupled with assistance from the international community, supplemented by the major contributions of the Ethiopian Government, the RRC seemed to have brought under control the calamitous effects of the 1972-74 drought. It was now involved in development activities such as settling people from drought-prone areas in relatively more fertile parts of the country, building infrastructure, including schools, health clinics and feeder roads, and supplying better seeds, farm implements and fertilizers. The RRC was, in fact, about to transform the nature of its operations while at the same time transforming some of the drought victims into self-reliant producers of agricultural wealth.

Then it was struck a terrible blow. On 23 July 1977, after a campaign of harassment and sabotage by infiltrators, Somalia invaded Ethiopia with a military force of at least 100,000 fully equipped troops. In gross violation of both the UN and OAU Charters, and with apparently no regard for the principles of the Non-Aligned Movement, Somalia tore across the border and in a demented fury mowed down thousands of defenceless and innocent Ethiopians. Millions of people were again made destitute, children were again made into orphans, and painstaking settlement work which had seemed to augur so well for the future was smashed to smithereens. Expensive, hard-earned achievements such as the big hospitals at Jijiga and Kebri Dehar, schools, clinics, bridges, farms, power stations, water-supply systems, small-scale industrial plants and even the UN-financed settlement projects for nomads – nothing was spared. Whole villages and towns were razed to the ground.

The motive behind this naked aggression was Somalia's dream of expansion and conquest sanctioned by forces opposed to Ethiopia's



Somalia's invasion of the Ogaden had tragic consequences for the development of the region. Amongst many other installations, the RRC's tractor garage at Gode was totally destroyed by the invaders (top). Likewise (above) the vital Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway was put out of action.

peaceful development. Halliday and Molyneux describe the geopolitical context of the Somalian invasion in *The Ethiopian Revolution*: 'Whilst US encouragement was not the only factor leading to the Somali decision to invade Ogaden, the shift in US posture from early 1977, as it was perceived in Mogadishu and as it affected conservative Arab advice to the Somalis, played a central role in detonating the Ogaden war. . .'[1] The invasion also had its roots in Somalia's desire to annex a part of the Ethiopian territory – the Ogaden – where pastoralists were wont to graze their herds. The attack showed, moreover, that Somalia rejected the principles of respect for the borders of nation states sanctified by the international community.

According to the report of a high-powered commission set up by the Ethiopian Government, Ethiopia suffered tremendous losses. Specific information pin-pointed precisely the extent of the havoc and destruction.[2] In terms of social infrastructure, for example, 313 schools housing 1,252 classes with a combined total of 35,000 pupils were destroyed. In money terms, the loss was estimated to be Birr 48,571,388. To rebuild and equip the two hospitals and the 56 clinics in Harerge, Bale and Sidamo that were destroyed during the invasion, would cost no less than Birr 7.5 million. Describing the aftermath of the war the Commission's report states:

> Residents of the areas subjected to Somalia's war of aggression had suffered most bitterly. Some 19,056 Ethiopians had disappeared or were kidnapped by the forces of invasion. According to a Government study, 25,986 Ethiopians were killed by Somali soldiers. During the short-lived war of invasion villages were uprooted and families entirely destroyed, property worth billions of birr was lost. Among other things these included 730,000 cattle, 330,000 camels, 38,005 horses, 660,006 donkeys.[3]
>
> Schools, hospitals, clinics, bridges, roads, churches and public utilitites were amongst the property destroyed.[3]

The damage caused by Somalia's aggression was not confined to the residents of the war areas, however. Ethiopians from elsewhere who were simply going about their business of helping their compatriots fell victim to the invasion, too. Among them were Gebre Hiwot Gofere and Mohamed Ibrahim, both driver-employees of the RRC, who were killed while helping the drought-affected and displaced victims in the Ogaden, Harerge in 1977.

Almost as if in collusion with the destructive Somalian forces, secessionist bandits and counter-revolutionary elements in the north of the country also took up arms against the people and Government of Ethiopia. At times they disrupted the smooth flow of aid to the inhabitants of the drought-afflicted parts of Eritrea and in some instances to other areas in the north of the country. As in the Ogaden and the south, the activities of these hostile elements, whose objective was nothing less than the dismemberment of Ethiopia, resulted in massive loss of life and heavy damage to property. A number of voluntary agencies, including Oxfam, have also observed the disruption of relief, rehabilitation and development activities caused by these hostile elements.

These and other factors further broadened the responsibilities of the Ethiopian Government which already had to cater for its drought-affected population. To the 3 million people who were already seeking assistance from the RRC in various forms, were added another 2.4 million who had been terrorized and maimed in the south and south-eastern parts of the country by the Somalian invasion. In Bale alone, 502,550 agriculturists and 319,300 pastoralists were displaced and their social and economic way of life destroyed, leaving them utterly dependent on domestic and international assistance.[4]

Invasion from Somalia and the anti-Ethiopian activities of secessionists have not been the only threat to Ethiopia's peaceful development in the ensuing years, however. The drought, with only a brief respite, also continued to menace the country and, by early 1978, was affecting some two million people in the hard-hit areas of western Wello, southern Tigrai, eastern Gonder and northern Shewa.[5]

The most severe aspect of the disaster occurred in the four *awrajas* of western Wello where the incidence of a debilitating and fatal disease known as ergotism exacerbated the situation. The disease, characterized by its maiming and amputative effects on humans, necessitated swift action by the Ethiopian Government, voluntary organizations and other humanitarian agencies. Medical services were provided and emergency relief aid despatched without delay. The serious concern and immediate stand taken by the Government to nip the problem in the bud was shown by the formation of the Natural-Disaster Aid Coordinating Committee, chaired by Comrade Mengistu Haile Mariam, Head of State of Socialist Ethiopia, in May 1978.

All available resources were mobilized including non-lethal defence equipment. Army helicopters, Air Force planes, military vehicles, and men in uniform garnered from a number of units were used to deliver the urgently needed items. Grain, clothing, medicine and associated relief supplies were brought to the needy at impressive speed. Parallel to these relief efforts, massive campaigns were launched to move and settle those needy people of Wello and Tigrai to more fertile areas where they might have some hope of regaining their prosperity. Between May 1978 and November 1979, about 17,425 metric tons of nutritious foodstuffs were distributed by the Committee in the six administrative regions affected[6].

Of particular importance in these endeavours was the RRC's intensive involvement in the four *awrajas* of Wello – Werehimenu, Wadela Delanta, Lasta, and Wag – to ameliorate the effects of ergotism. Between March and June 1977, the RRC had committed about Birr 13 million to help the inhabitants of these four *awrajas*.

Nor did the Coordinating Committee stop at tackling the immediate consequences of the disaster. It conducted a study to solve effectively the recurrent drought crisis by a massive resettlement scheme. The planned scheme, the details of which had already been drawn up, would involve the relocation of some 250,000 people to potential agricultural sites in different regions of the country. The giant resettlement project would cost the nation over Birr 71 million, to be financed partly by the Government, with the rest sought from domestic and international sources.[7] Accordingly a total of Birr 48,224,681 was collected and pledged from domestic sources for the ambitious resettlement.[8] Thereafter, about 22,000 heads of families from the hard-hit areas of Wello were moved for settlement in Gonder, Harerge, Bale and Welega. Plans to move the remaining 88,000 settler dependents were drafted and have been carried out over the past few years as dwellings have been completed.[9]

In the south-eastern and southern parts of the country, namely in the administrative regions of Harerge, Bale and Sidamo, areas that had suffered during the drought of the early 1970s, nature was once again turning against human endeavours.[10] In 1978, large-scale livestock losses were recorded, threatening the subsistence of the pastoral nomads of these regions, as well as sharply reducing the supply of cattle where they were needed in development programmes. The population of the low-lying areas of Harerge, Bale and Sidamo, living in an environment that was harsh at the best of times, were so dependent on their livestock both for food and as a means of exchange for other basic requirements that a severe depletion in the number of cattle and goats affected them particularly badly. It is estimated that 90 per cent of their cattle, 70 per cent of their sheep and 60 per cent each of their camels and goats died, causing a serious food problem, milk being their staple diet.[11]

It is against this background that the problems troubling Ethiopia should be examined and analysed in the light of the assistance that has been sought, acquired and used for relief, rehabilitation and resettlement programmes. It is also against this background that the role played by the RRC and all types of donors should be appraised. Without the constant flow of assistance from the international community, which gave generously through voluntary agencies and on a bilateral basis, the serious food and other requirements of the nation's drought-hit and war-affected populations could not have been met. To say the least, victims would not have managed to carry on their normal livelihood and many of them would certainly have died without the human concern shown by people overseas.

When the grim realities of human tragedy in the northern, southern and south-eastern parts of the country began to unfold, the initial response of the Ethiopian Government through the RRC was to release much of its development funds for relief assistance purposes, make appeals to donor governments and international and voluntary organizations, and mobilize the local people to help themselves as much as possible.

As always, however, the RRC's resources fell far short of its needs. A comparison of total assistance requirements and receipts between 1978 and 1979 reveals some hard facts about this situation. In 1978, the total grain required by the RRC for distribution to the drought-affected population was 644,000 metric tons, while what was actually obtained was only about 181,555 metric tons. In 1979, what was required by way of aid was about 412,000 metric tons of grain, whereas the amount received was only 126,565 metric tons. Despite the shortages, every attempt was made by the RRC to reach all its countrymen who had been laid low, whether by bandits and secessionists or by the bright and shiny sky that still refused to rain.

The Aftermath of the Dual Calamities

When the forces of aggression had been driven out of Ethiopia, their victims began flocking for succour to various reception centres in the regions concerned. Now charged also with responsibility to assist the war victims, the RRC came to their aid with the help of international and voluntary organizations. Relief work focussed mainly on providing food, water and medical treatment and associated arrangements such as storage depots and transport facilities. More than 200,000 metric tons of relief supplies and in excess of Birr 30 million of operational expenses including manpower resources were deployed to mitigate the after-effects of the military attacks.[12] For the displaced persons in their thousands, for the wounded, the blinded, the weak, the frightened, the orphaned, the widowed, the dispossessed and the dying, there were 30 relief shelters, not counting other such centres in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa.[13] Of these shelters, 18 were in the Ogaden.

Supplementing the RRC's efforts and making very important contributions, both practically and in terms of morale, were many international organizations. Oxfam of Great Britain, World Vision, the Society of International Missionaries and UNDP, UNICEF and USAID all carried out medical assistance and feeding programmes despite the attempts of Somalia to disrupt their humanitarian involvement.[14] The outcome of all this work was a dramatic reduction in the number of lives that would otherwise have been lost due to starvation, disease and injury.

Having taken the edge off this emergency, the RRC once again looked to the future and started organizing productive activities with a view to creating the basis for long-term rehabilitative programmes in these drought-prone areas. Agricultural settlement and resettlement schemes in Gode, Kelafo, Mustahil on the Wabe Shebelle river, and at Shekosh, all in the Ogaden, had already been under way before the invasion. In many instances, the Commission had to transport settlers with all their belongings from as far away as Misrak Gashamo – nearly 800 kilometres from Gode and only a few kilometres from the Somali border.[15] Self-sufficiency programmes had reached the point of take-off when the aggressors invaded these parts of Ethiopia.

Number and Location of Victims: Detailed Account

(a) Bale Region

As pointed out earlier in this chapter, Bale was one of the areas invaded by Somalian forces of aggression. By mid-May 1978, the invasion had resulted in some 66,000 victims being housed in relief shelters in order to receive supplies provided by the RRC.[16] By October 1978, their number had increased to about 350,000 with some 1,000 new victims coming to the centres every day, requiring over 140 additional relief and rehabilitation shelters to be established[17]. A survey conducted in September 1978 in 110 camps in Bale recorded about 270,000 inmates.[18] In December that year an estimate of the population of an additional 74 camps in this region was prepared by the RRC; it totalled 330,000[19] as at the end of 1978. A summary of the census appears in Table 13.

TABLE 13
Relief-Shelter Population in Bale Administrative Region (December 1978)

Awraja (Province)	Relief and Rehabilitation Centres	Number of People
Mendeyo	114	182,888
Gemale	21	38,610
Wabe	49	108,763
Total	**184**	**330,261**

Source: *Draft on Assessment of the Extent of Damage to People and Property Caused by Somalian War of Aggression* (undated) RRC Archives, p.4.

The total population receiving assistance in the region in 1979 was, however, more than half a million. Table 14 further illustrates the huge numbers of people the RRC had to reach if it was to fulfil its responsibilities in Bale alone. In fact, about 200,000 more people were being assisted by the RRC directly. These people lived outside established relief-rehabilitation centres.

TABLE 14
Population Receiving Assistance in Bale Administrative Region by *Awraja* (1979)

Awraja	Number of People Assisted		Percent of *Awraja* Population
	In Settlements	In Shelters	
Genale	162,970	–	53
Mendeya	249,158	–	66
Wabe	147,353	–	65
Elkere	–	16,000	10
Dollo	–	11,000	13
Total	**559,481**	**27,000**	

Source: *Draft on Assessment of the Extent of Damage to People and Property Caused by Somalian War of Aggression* (undated), RRC Archives, p.14.

(b) Sidamo Region

The situation was not much better in Sidamo administrative region. In 1978, over 20,000 victims from war-ravaged parts of Sidamo were housed and taken care of by the RRC.[20] A further 110,000 had to be returned to their old homes although they had lost their means of livelihood and their personal possessions.[21] Ultimately, the Commission had to intervene in reinstating them, which put a heavier strain on its resources. Table 15 indicates the kind of numbers involved in Sidamo, but the number of people who were receiving direct assistance in the relief centres and semi-permanent settlements was in fact 229,000 in 1979.[22]

TABLE 15
Population Receiving Assistance in Sidamo Administrative Region by *Awraja* (1979)

Awraja	Population under Settlement	Population under Relief Assistance	Percent of *Awraja* Population
Sidamo	–	12,500	2
Gedeo	3,800	3,500	1.5
Jemjem	9,600	58,000	17
Borena	13,900	61,000	49
Arero	12,700	55,000	92
Total	40,000	190,000	

Source: *Draft on Assessment of the Extent of Damage to People and Property Caused by Somalian War of Aggression* (undated), RRC Archives, p.5.

(c) Harerge Region

Perhaps Harerge suffered the most and experienced the severest of losses. More people were uprooted from their villages and more property was destroyed there than in any of the other regions. After the war, many thousands of people were found to be destitute, malnourished and sick. Shelters were set up for them and assistance was provided to about half a million people, mostly from the highland regions of Harerge who had migrated to the major cities. People from the lowlands also flocked to relief centres.

The most severe effects of the natural calamities were compounded by the man-made destruction. Some 1.2 million people were affected in Harerge, of whom 806,000 were pastoralists and 474,000 were agriculturists.

The RRC's Efforts to Overcome the Calamities

The RRC did its utmost to tackle this disastrous situation by providing relief assistance mobilized from domestic and international sources as the first move to save lives, and by setting up the beginnings of rehabilitation programmes towards a long-term solution. All in all, the RRC provided emergency relief support to over 3 million Ethiopians in the north and the south during this period.

Rehabilitation

The rehabilitation of people so utterly bereft was in fact the biggest challenge facing the RRC – long-term solutions always tend to require deeper commitments. In this case what was involved was the mounting of resettlement and settlement schemes and a start to the process of motivating the war-displaced population to help themselves. Those dispossessed by drought had to be given farm implements, seeds, fertilizers, oxen and water to be able to stand on their own feet. The pastoral population, also left with nothing, had to be supported through re-stocking programmes. All of this called for a tremendous volume of resources in terms of both manpower and material. Furthermore, this was yet again a problem which the Commission was not able to cope with alone, given the limited resources at its disposal. It was therefore necessary, once more, to seek international aid. This was imperative because the problems at hand were simply far beyond the means of Ethiopia to deal with.

The main aspects of the RRC's rehabilitation efforts are summarized below:

1. Short- and Medium-term Rehabilitation Programmes

1.1 *10,000 hectares Jijiga Agricultural Development Project (Harerge)*

This programme was intended to help local farmers by providing all-round assistance with agricultural inputs. The RRC earmarked Birr 182,840 for the project in 1977 and another Birr 300,000 in 1979. Over the same period, a total of Birr 935,834 was allocated to the project by other sources.

1.2 *Provision of Oxen, Seeds and Tractor Services to the Highland Regions of Harerge*

The project covered Fadis, Kombolcha, Hirna, Alemaya, Fugnan Bira, Babile, Meiso, Sodeno, Kurfa Chale, Grawa and other places of highland Harerge. Its objective was to make good the oxen and seeds that farmers in these areas had lost together with all their property as a result of the Somalian invasion. Up to May 1977, the RRC had laid out about Birr 500,000 for administrative expenses and about Birr 1.65 million for the project itself. In addition, some 20 tractors bought by the RRC were providing services to farmers.

1.3 *Provision of Oxen, Seeds and Tractor Services to the Bale Administrative Region*

About 20 tractors were deployed to help farmers who were to be rehabilitated and resettled in Mendeyo, Ganale, Wabe and Dollo *awrajas* of the region. In addition to providing better seeds and oxen, the RRC spent more than Birr 502,000 in the four *awrajas* on reinstating the victims of Somalian aggression. Victims of natural disasters in other parts of the country were also attended to. As a result of the failure of the rains in the *awraja* of Chebo and Gurage in Shewa administrative region, on the other hand, the RRC gave out Birr 50,000 for the purchase of seeds, grain and other assistance to people in the worst-affected areas.

2. Long-term Rehabilitation Programmes

2.1 *Gofa Agricultural Development (Gamo Gofa)*

The project, involving the Centre Internationale de Developpement et de Recherches, Terre des Hommes, the German Protestant Agency for Development Aid, and the EEC, with the RRC contributing Birr 182,840, sought, in May 1978, to establish and assist 39 Peasants' Associations in an area covering 12,000 hectares. The main activities included agriculture, afforestation, co-operative extension, cottage industries, health care and infrastructure maintenance and development.

2.2 *Kobo-Alamata Agricultural Development (Wello)*

This project was aimed at helping victims living in one of the areas worst hit by drought. The Kobo-Alamata Project, covering 100,000 hectares, was financed with DM 19 million assistance from the Federal Republic of Germany. Project activities in Aware, Golesha and Zobel included road-building and other construction work in cooperation with EPID, the opening of field research stations at Jerjelle, Ayub, Mendefera and Aradam. Dwelling quarters for Golesha settlement staff and for young farmers were also built. Through this project the Aware Handicraft Centre and pits for a methane gas installation at Golesha and Alamata were also established. In agriculture, activities concentrated on research, extension services, seed multiplication and irrigation. Cropping with sorghum was also a major component of the programme. Afforestation programmes covering over 90 hectares were undertaken and many seedling nurseries established.

2.3 *Southern Gamo Gofa Rural Development Project*

This started in August 1977. It was undertaken with a capital budget of US$ 196,000 contributed by USAID, while the RRC provided staff, labour and material costing US$ 99,000.

2.4 *Deddessa Soil Conservation Study (Welega)*

The project involved about 500,000 hectares and included soil mapping and evaluation studies costing a total of US$ 364,840 that was donated by the International Development Association.

2.5 *Aphid Control Project (Western Wello)*

Up to March 1979, the project was in progress with a USAID grant of Birr 520,000 and an RRC contribution of Birr 293,216.

2.6 *Dana Settlement and Development Project*

This project, jointly financed by the Swiss Evangelical Nile Mission, the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund, the Centre International de Developpement et de Recherches (CIDR), and the Christian Relief and Development Association, was completed in May 1978 after three years' work.

2.7 *Emergency Small Farmers Crop Protection (Bale, Harerge, Shewa, Sidamo, Tigrai, Wello)*

The project ran from October 1975 to August 1977. With a USAID grant of Birr 2,465,364, pesticide and equipment were distributed to farmers in various regions.

2.8 *Sidamo Rangelands Development Project*

This was started jointly by USAID and the Ethiopian Government. USAID contributed US$ 1,210,000 and the Ethiopian Government allocated Birr 1,248,000. This was a pastoralist surface-water development programme culminating in the construction of 11 ponds and 200 kilometres of access tracks.

CHAPTER 7

WIDER HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL REHABILITATION EFFORTS

PHASE FOUR OF RRC ACTIVITIES: SEPTEMBER 1979-DECEMBER 1983

THE previous chapters have attempted to familiarize the reader with the extent of both the natural and man-made disasters that have affected the country, and the various measures that were taken by the international community and the Ethiopian people and Government to solve these problems. We have also tried to indicate the multitude of rehabilitation and settlement programmes that were carried out by the RRC in different parts of the country.

While the RRC was deeply engaged in the rehabilitation and settlement of people from the drought-stricken and war-affected parts of the country, other Government agencies such as the Settlement Authority and the Awash Valley Development Agency were also carrying out similar programmes with other disadvantaged people of different backgrounds.

The implementation of settlement programmes, irrespective of the type of settlers involved, by three different institutions with identical goals, entailed unnecessary wastage of manpower, finance and materials as well as avoidable duplication of effort. To overcome inefficiencies of this kind and to maximize its output with the minimum cost, the Government of Socialist Ethiopia merged the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, the Settlement Authority and the Awash Valley Development Agency into a single, strengthened institution retaining the RRC's name, by Proclamation No. 173 of 1979. The new RRC was charged with the following responsibilities:

1. To coordinate and distribute promptly the necessary relief aid to those citizens of the country who are at present or may in future be affected by various natural and man-made disasters and to find lasting solutions to those problems.
2. To resettle, by employing appropriate methods, those people who have no land or insufficient or overutilized land holdings, or who are displaced due to natural or man-made disasters, or are jobless, as well as those people who lead nomadic and similar patterns of life on such lands which, for various reasons, are lying idle.

3. To encourage the organization of resettled people along socialist lines of production in an endeavour to promote their living standards and enhance the economic development of the country.
4. To get maximum results by integrating these activities of rehabilitation and settlement.[1]

Although an institution with over 4,000 employees from a variety of backgrounds and with differing experience is undoubtedly an enormous asset, it does also raise problems of administration, deployment and integration of departments from what used to be the three separate organizations.

Under its new plan of operations, the Commission divided its responsibilities into two major groupings – professional and administrative. Settlement, engineering, agricultural technology and land-reclamation activities were grouped together in the professional sector, while finance, logistics, relief and other departments were placed in the administrative sector. These areas of responsibility were headed by deputy commissioners who were in turn responsible to the Commissioner. Recently, a third deputy commissioner has been appointed with responsibility mainly for aid and all types of assistance.

Furthermore, for the efficient implementation of its programmes of action and for the swift reporting of its wide-ranging activities, the RRC delegated responsibilities down to the regional level. Thirteen branch offices were set up and/or strengthened in different administrative regions, each headed by an RRC representative. Programmes were launched ranging from distribution of relief items to environmental and human rehabilitation, and the moving of people from over-used and over-populated areas of the country to potentially rich and at present under-utilized regions.

Persisting Problems

The drought that began in the early 1970s fluctuated in its intensity throughout the decade, and affected different regions at different times, but never fully lifted.

The small and big rains of 1979 were irregular and inadequate, exposing the southern and south-western parts of the country in particular to severe food shortages. In its report on the recurrence of food shortages in Ethiopia, the RRC's account of the situation was as follows:

> The 1979 *belg* (February to May) rains were generally lower than expected and completely failed in the south. Similarly, the recorded rainfall of the 1979 *meher* (June to September season) was lower than expected and the areas which did not get enough rain during the preceding *belg* season continued to get no rain. The rain failed to occur also in south-eastern Ethiopia. Furthermore, the vital *bega* (October to January) rains failed in the south and in the Red Sea area. Finally, the 1980 *belg* rains are already late by over one month.[2]

Ethiopian agriculture depends very heavily upon the country's two principal rainy seasons – *belg* (February to May) and *meher* (June to September). Lowlanders traditionally plant long-maturing crops such as maize and sorghum during the *belg* season. Highlanders, in the different climate of the mountains, take advantage of the *belg* rains to plant short-maturing crops such as barley which they then harvest in June and July. The *meher* rains allow the planting of long-maturing grains in highland areas and the resulting crop is normally harvested in November/December.

The decline in the quantity of rainfall, the irregularity of the rains and/or their complete absence in some parts of the country in 1979, forced the Commission to appeal again to the international community to come to its aid. Two inter-agency missions led by the UN Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO) were sent to Ethiopia in mid-1980 to make an on-the-spot assessment of the problems and make recommendations concerning the provision of assistance. Of the 5.2 million needy people in 1980, 2.8 million were drought victims, while 2.4 million had been displaced from their homes because of both the Somalian war of aggression and drought. The two missions endorsed the RRC's 1980 requests for 304,000 metric tons of food items for drought victims and for 721,862 metric tons of grain, 50,448 metric tons of rehabilitative food, 33,440 metric tons of edible oil for periods ranging from 18 to 24 months for all types of victims, along with hundreds of thousands of blankets, items of clothing, vehicles and the provision of water for the displaced.[3] Although the RRC's request for food aid for all kinds of victims for the three-and-a-half-year period 1980-84 came to 2,460,000 metric tons, the amount it actually received was only 439,515 metric tons or 18 per cent of the total requirement.

Of the 5.2 million needy people in 1980, 36.5 per cent or 1.9 million were living in Sidamo, Bale and Harerge, all of them affected by both natural and man-made calamities. The failure of the rains

Failure of the rains in 1979 and 1980 had particularly severe implications for pastoral peoples. For example, in Harerge's Jijiga awraja alone, an estimated 350,000 head of cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys and camels perished.

The RRC's efforts to save lives in remoter areas like Surma attracted the admiration and praise of the international community. 'There is no road to Surma,' Liv Ullman noted. 'The RRC is doing a fantastic job in Surma and throughout the country.'

during this period resulted in heavy animal losses. For instance, in Jijiga *awraja* in Harerge administrative region over 350,000 head of cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys and camels died. Camels, noted for their resistance to drought, perished by the hundreds of thousands, notably in the low-lying areas of Sidamo.

One of the major rivers of southern Ethiopia, the Dawa, became a dry riverbed. Small private and Government agricultural plots which had drawn water from the Dawa had to be abandoned. The effects of the Somalian war of aggression and the subsequent atrocities committed by Somalian infiltrators further aggravated the situation.

The low-lying areas of Gamo Gofa had similar drought problems. The wells had dried up, and there was no vegetation at all on the land – a direct threat to the survival of the animal population. The people had to rely on handouts for their survival. Liv Ullman, the celebrated Norwegian actress, visited the area in December 1980. In a New York interview on 11 January 1981, Miss Ullman put the plight of the Gamo Gofa and Kefa victims in the following manner:

> I see women sitting, completely grey from dust, sitting and waiting to see if they will get food this day . . . You know you don't have the verbal contact, so you take their hand, and you know it's a wrinkly and thin tired hand.[4]

The RRC, through its branch offices in those administrative regions, attempted to deliver massive relief assistance to the unfortunate people of these areas. Because of the lack of communications in these localities and the inaccessibility of places such as Surma, the Commission used its few aircraft to transport the urgently needed goods. A Twin Otter under temporary loan from World Vision International, was also assigned to fly relief items to the victims. The Government's campaign to save the lives of its citizens in remoter areas like Surma has been admired and praised by members of the international community. This operation drew the following comment from Liv Ullman:

> There is no road to Surma, and relief supplies have to be air-lifted. The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission is doing a fantastic job in Surma and throughout the country.[5]

Neither was the severe drought confined to the south of the country; as the years passed it begain to spread rapidly. According to an Oxfam study:

> In 1980 the rains on the eastern escarpment and lowlands of Tigrai were

> 30 per cent of normal, reducing crop yields and culling livestock. The 1981 rains were worse still for many parts of the province . . . In Tigrai and Eritrea, the failure of the 1982 rains meant that, for five or six seasons in succession, the harvest had been poor. Eritrean *dura* (sorghum) prices more than doubled in 1982, but people in drought areas managed to survive by eating wild fruits such as cactus and wild grass seeds. The central highlands and eastern lowlands of Tigrai were particularly hard hit in 1981 and, with the failure of the 1982 rains, this area broadened into a belt stretching from Adwa to Enderta districts. There was scarcely any harvest in some areas of northern Wello, eastern Gonder, and central and north-eastern Tigrai in 1982.

Libo, Gayint, Simen and Wegara *awrajas* of Gonder, which hitherto had not experienced significant shortages, were added to the list of areas short of rain in 1982, thus requiring immediate government assistance. The number of cattle lost as a result of the new cycle of drought in Gonder administrative region was estimated at over 170,000.[6]

The total number of people affected by the 1982 drought in Gonder, Wello, Tigrai and Eritrea administrative regions was 2,270,000,[7] up from 1,850,000 in 1981.[8] And this figure rose again, by over 70 per cent, in April 1983. This means that in a period of two years the number of people affected in the four worst-hit regions of the north rose from 1,850,000 to 3,400,000.

Some of the drought-stricken areas of Gonder had no roads and the Commission had to resort to airlifting operations there, too. Airstrips were cleared in Zui Hamusit and Muja in Libo and Gayint *awrajas* respectively. The RRC's Twin Otter, provided by World Vision International, was assigned to fly relief items, medicines and dressings, shelter material and drinking water to the needy. Medical programmes for the sick and intensive feeding programmes for the young and the weak were started by the Ethiopian Red Cross and World Vision units in Ibinat and Zui Hamusit, both in Libo.

It is worth mentioning at this point the timely assistance provided by Deutsche Welthungerhilfe/German Agro Action to the people of Gayint *awraja* in Gonder. This agency started its Ethiopia programme in 1983 with the opening of the area by a road linking Nefas Mewcha and Arb Gebeya. The new road, built in the food-for-work programme, has facilitated the delivery of relief goods to the drought victims of the low-lying areas of Gayint. Other aid from German Agro Action to the residents of this *awraja* included the construction of a warehouse, distribution of draught oxen to the peasant association and the digging of water wells. Moreover, this agency gave a substantial amount of money to help the needy of Bale.

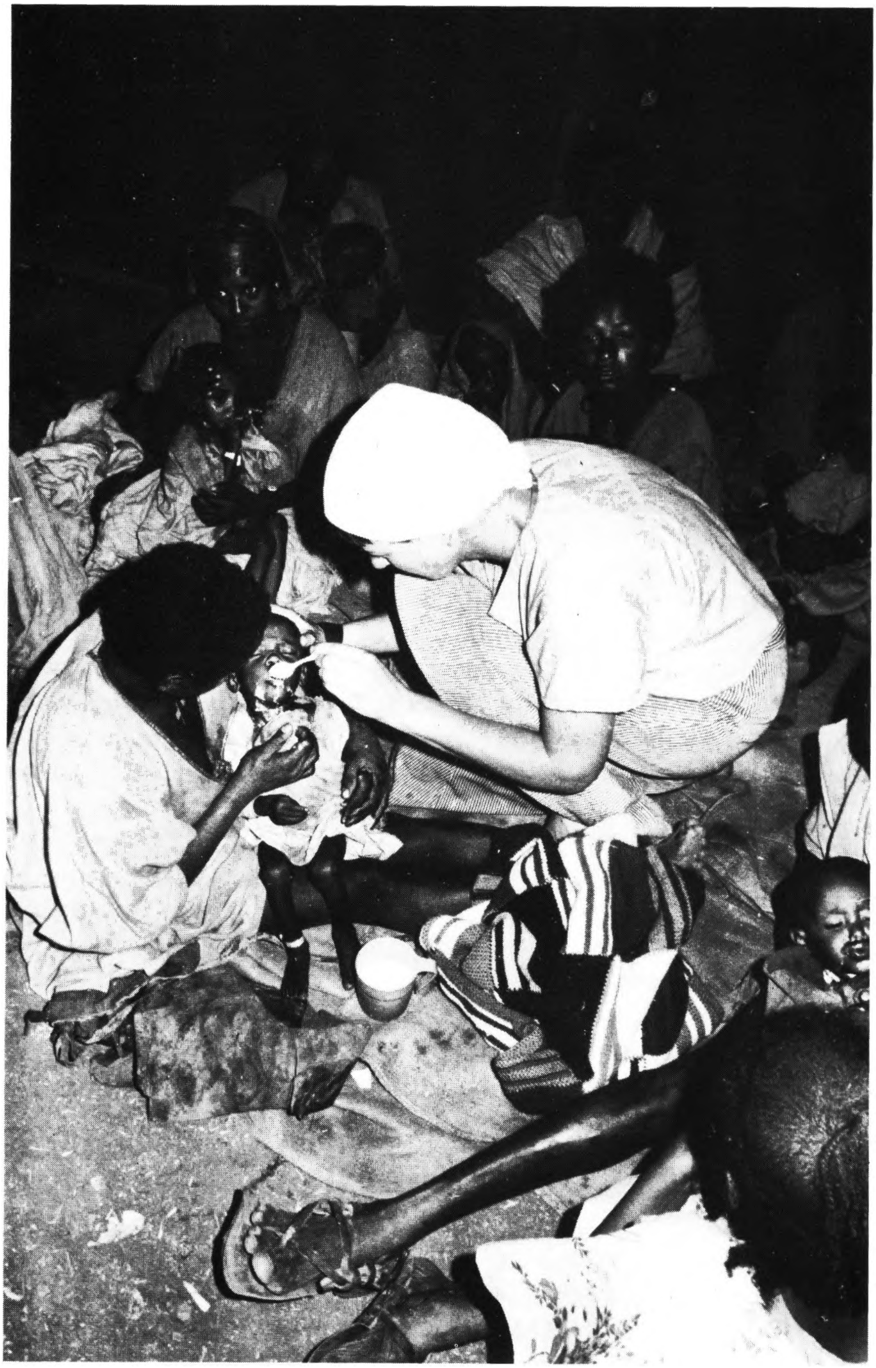
With assistance from the international community, the Commission set up storage and other facilities in these areas, and implemented food-for-work programmes to build new roads and to maintain those already in existence in order to ease the delivery of relief supplies. With the cooperation of the National Water Resources Commission, wells were dug and pumps installed in selected areas of Libo where acute water shortages were common.

As the people of Libo, Gayint, Simen and Wegera *awrajas* had to leave their homes in search of assistance, so also the drought victims of Wello, particularly those residing in Wag *awraja* which was the hardest hit, migrated to Korem in search of help from the Government. Korem, with a normal population of 8,000, had to accommodate around 50,000 people in 1983. Because of the heavy influx, it was beyond the capacity of the RRC-built shelters to house the new migrants. Newcomers therefore had to be accommodated in schools, unfinished houses, open market places, Government offices, and wherever else was appropriate. Feeding programmes, medical treatment and other services were rendered by Oxfam and Save the Children Fund of the UK, Irish Concern, the Ethiopian Red Cross Society and other organizations, while the RRC continued the distribution of relief supplies.

Wello's neighbouring regions, Tigrai and Eritrea, had similar problems. Massive assistance programmes were carried out for the 1,840,000 needy people of those regions. Shelters and reception centres were built in the towns of Asmara, Keren, Tessenei and Massawa in Eritrea and in Aksum, Mekele and Adwa in Tigrai. Intensive feeding programmes were also carried out for the under-nourished in both regions. Of the total assistance distributed by the RRC in the first half of 1983, 37 per cent went to Tigrai and Eritrea,[9] and this, in money terms, was well over Birr 24 million.

The enormous assistance channelled into the regions of Wello, Tigrai, Gonder and Eritrea, which have traditionally been drought-prone areas, and the various programmes launched by the RRC and its partners helped to stave off a much greater human tragedy. The work and dedication of these organizations in the northern regions of the country have been noted by the Government of Ethiopia and deeply appreciated.

The scale of the country's economic and ecological problems is



Member of a CRDA medical team feeding an undernourished child in an intensive feeding programme at Ibnat.

such, however, that the spectre of drought cannot be entirely abolished without many years of sustained assistance and of concerted development efforts both by Ethiopia and by her overseas partners.

Not only drought victims benefited from the RRC's assistance programmes, however. Relief and rehabilitation schemes were set up also for those who had suffered at the hands of the invaders from Somalia and secessionist elements in the northern part of the country.

Self-Sufficiency Schemes

Under the Revolutionary Government Ethiopia has made determined efforts to respond to the immediate problems of drought and hunger not only with immediate, emergency solutions but also with longer-term programmes and projects aimed at enabling the country and people to achieve self-sufficiency.

In this regard, during the period from September 1979 to late 1984, a number of efforts were made to strengthen the modest self-help schemes and resettlement programmes that had been started in previous years.

By 1979, for example, there were 280 relief and rehabilitation centres spread throughout the province of Bale, each with a population of around 500 families. By 1980, the number of these centres had increased to 400. The inhabitants were provided with minimum inputs under the basic services programme initiated by the Government, and many have since achieved self-sufficiency in food.

For the internally displaced people of the Ogaden and for those returning from Somalia, Djibouti, the Sudan and other neighbouring countries, the RRC, again with the support of the international community, has been furnishing assistance ranging from food and medicines to self-sufficiency kits.

A Government assessment report issued some years ago on the situation in the northern parts of the country, Eritrea in particular, put the number of people internally displaced by the activities of the secessionist elements at over half a million. Through a multi-faceted campaign which was launched by the Government in January 1982, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission participated in the reconstruction of the social and economic infrastructures which had been put out of action by the secessionists. The cities of Asmara, Massawa, Keren, Tessenei and others benefited directly from these programmes. Assistance included the provision of boats and nets to the fishermen of Massawa, donated through the good offices of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), to the supply of relief items that were provided to all those in need. Over Birr 5 million was spent on this multi-faceted reconstruction programme in the region.[10]

Ethiopia's policy with regard to refugees is guided by the principles of the 1951 United Nations Geneva Convention and its protocol of 1967, and by the 1969 Convention of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa. These international and regional instruments have been ratified by the Government of Socialist Ethiopia and provide the foundation for the country's policy towards refugees.

In more concrete terms, it is Ethiopia's policy to give the basic necessities of life to refugees, such as shelter, food and clothing, and to resettle them if they so desire. In addition, whenever possible, gainful employment is provided.

Moreover, in accordance with the OAU Convention, refugees are prohibited from engaging in any activity likely to cause tension between Member States, or to undertake any subversive activity which may be directed against any Member State of the OAU. In compliance with the OAU Convention, Ethiopia, as a country of asylum, endeavours to settle refugees at a reasonable distance from the frontier of their origin.

It is also generally agreed by the international community that the voluntary repatriation of refugees to their country of origin is one of the best means of promoting a durable solution to the plight of refugees. Ethiopia subscribes to this view. Ethiopia feels strongly, however, that the realization of this objective would require not only the creation of favourable conditions in the countries of origin, but also the cooperation of the countries of asylum and the active support of the international community. Ethiopia considers these factors to be essential if an effective and durable solution to the problem of refugees is to be attained.

In pursuance of these principles, it is Ethiopia's policy to persuade its nationals who find themselves in other countries to return and be reintegrated into the society. Socialist Ethiopia has, therefore, taken tangible measures to create favourable conditions for the repatriation of Ethiopian refugees to their homeland.

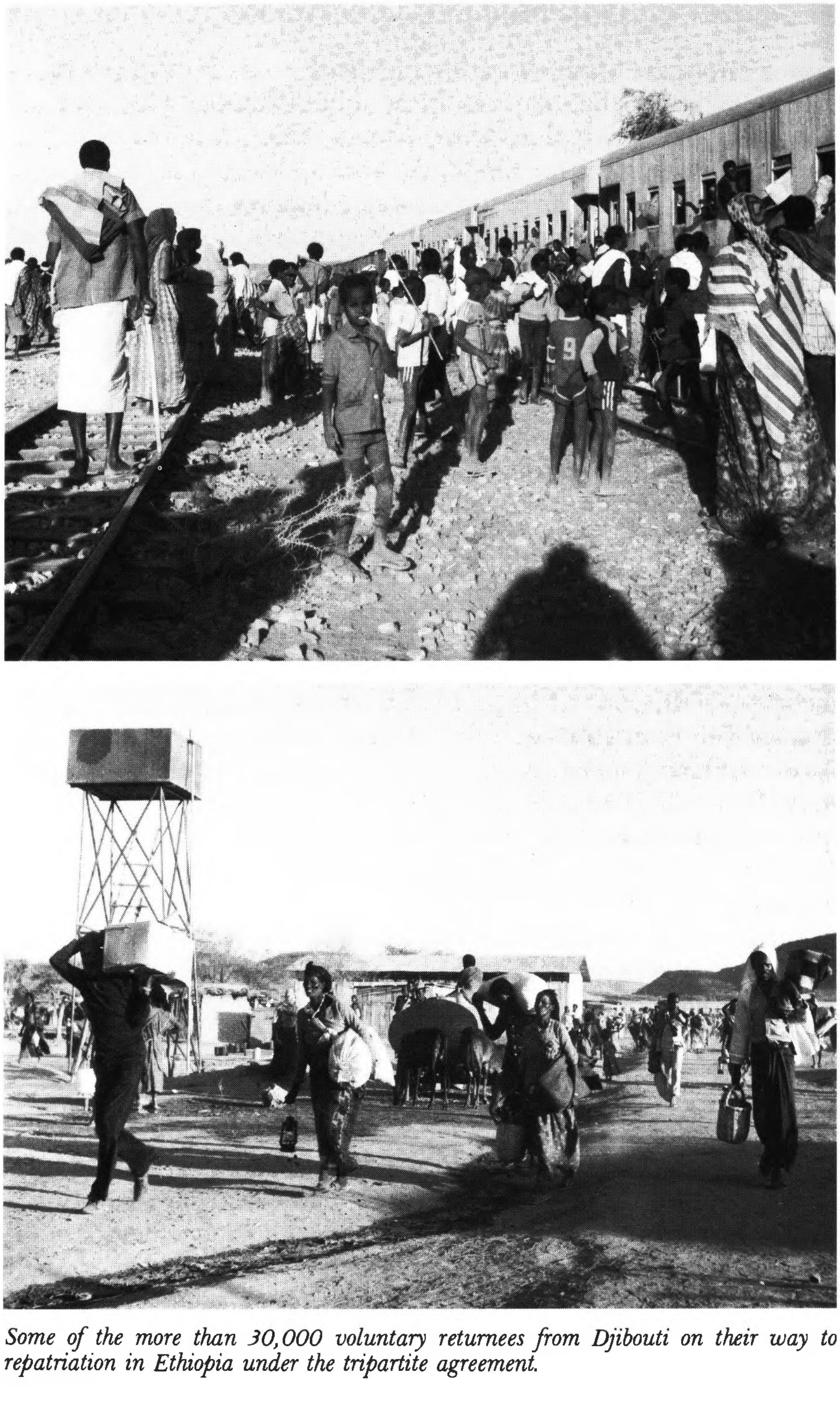
The Government has thus declared an amnesty for Ethiopian refugees residing in the Sudan and in order to show its good faith a commission was set up to receive, assist and rehabilitate returnees. During his visit to the Democratic Republic of the Sudan in May 1980, Comrade Mengistu had made a call to all Ethiopians to return home and participate in the ongoing socio-economic reconstruction of the country. Programmes of assistance include finding employment for returnees in their fields of work experience, providing them with incentives to join settlement schemes and finance and/or other self-sufficiency packages.

With backing from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the initiative taken by the Government to assist returnees from the Sudan has encouraged others to repatriate themselves voluntarily from other neighbouring countries. By 1984 some 250,000 people had returned from the Sudan, of whom 90,000 have been registered.[11]

The Government also issued an amnesty for all those Ethiopian nationals who were forced to seek shelter and sanctuary in neighbouring Djibouti in 1977-78. A tripartite commission involving the Governments of Djibouti, Ethiopia and the UNHCR was established in 1982 to rehabilitate and resettle returnees from Djibouti. This programme has also benefited those Ethiopians who crossed the border because of the Somalian war of aggression and who have now returned to their country. In order to accommodate returnees and facilitate their reintegration, the Ethiopian Government has established reception centres at strategic locations in border areas and has been providing the returnees with immediate relief assistance. This programme has been extended to include the restocking of herds for returning nomads, the supply of seeds, implements and other agricultural inputs to the agriculturalists, and the planning of cottage and other small-scale industries for those of urban background.

With the voluntary repatriation of 30,599 returnees from the Republic of Djibouti, the programme is now complete. The UNHCR earlier budgeted US$ 20 million for the repatriation programmes.[12] Continuing drought conditions have, however, adversely affected the UNHCR-Ethiopian Government Assistance Programme launched for returnees from the Republic of Djibouti and Somalia in particular.

The RRC was making strenuous efforts to contain the effects of recurring natural disasters when the 1983-84 drought emerged as one of the severest dangers to the ecologically-precarious areas of the country. The Commission, for instance, in 1984, required nearly Birr 95 million for the purchase and distribution of oxen and seeds to run its self-sufficiency schemes.



Some of the more than 30,000 voluntary returnees from Djibouti on their way to repatriation in Ethiopia under the tripartite agreement.

As ground-water development is an important part of the social service package in the RRC's self-sufficiency schemes, plans were also made to develop the facilities in 27 villages in the administrative regions of Harerge, Bale, Wello, Sidamo and Gonder, at a cost of Birr 6,015,057, as quoted by the Ethiopian Water Works Construction Agency.[13]

The RRC had already done much, within the limits of its capabilities, to provide water to the affected population. It had been keen to revitalize wells, the work on which was postponed, due to lack of funds, in eight villages in Shewa and Sidamo. It had also been striving to get 15 new wells dug in the critically affected *weredas* of Shewa. The total cost of these ventures has been put at Birr 756,325.[14] And to expedite well-drilling projects, the Commission in 1984 needed drilling rigs and accessories whose total estimated cost was Birr 9,960,000. These requirements have not yet been met and they are just as necessary today as they were then and it is worth emphasizing their importance again.

The current gruelling drought made it necessary to broaden the basis of the self-sufficiency programmes in the last quarter of 1984. As pointed out earlier, many of the farmers in the drought-stricken areas during these last years were left empty-handed and they needed all types of inputs if they were going to have any chance of resuming productive lives. The seeds which they were forced to eat for want of any food had to be made good, and draught oxen which had either perished, been slaughtered for meat in the absence of any other food, or sold, had to be replaced.

As part of the short-term solutions, farmers in the ecologically precarious areas had, therefore, to be assisted with self-sufficiency packages, including provision of seeds, pesticides and insecticides. Farmers who lost their oxen because of the drought thus required 66,500 draught oxen from the Government on a credit basis.[15] Some 68,000 different agricultural hand tools, 10,000 improved single-ox ploughs and 3,400 disc harrows were also needed by those hit by drought. In addition, 100 tractors with all accessories were put at the disposal of people who moved to new rehabilitiation centres.

Other inputs that were required at that time for the short-term recovery programme, according to the Action Programme Report, included selected seeds (141,000 quintals, scheduled to be supplied by the Ethiopian Seeds Corporation); fertilizers (54,800 quintals); and insecticides and pesticides worth Birr 2,600,000.

In the longer term, as an extension of this programme, five reservoirs, each for 16 provinces in three highland regions affected by the drought, are to be developed. Some 11 deep-water wells are to be sunk and around 5,000 hectares of pasture are due to be developed in Dubti area in the Awash Valley for 20,000 cattle.

The Action Programme also envisaged the extension of veterinary services. The plan has been to vaccinate 420,000 cattle against various animal diseases. Another 230,000 will receive anti-trypanosomiasis as well as other vaccinations against internal and external diseases.

According to the Action Programme Report, special efforts will be made to supplement rain-fed agriculture by irrigation over the years. Three types of irrigated agriculture are envisaged. First, irrigation schemes of less than 200 hectares are to be undertaken by peasant associations through the use of water held in earth and concrete dams. Secondly, the Ministry of Agriculture in cooperation with peasant and mass organizations will finalize the construction of 11 dams, work on which has already started in eight *awrajas* of four regions. These dams are expected to develop 3,810 hectares. Additionally, 18 small dams and 20 diversions will be effected and as a result 13,360 hectares developed.

Thirdly, farms of between 200 and 3,000 hectares will be developed through the use of 14 dams which will be constructed in five regions. With water from these dams the development of 9,800 hectares is envisaged. Supplies of water for consumption by humans and animals will also be boosted. Some 166 deep-water wells, 739 hand-dug wells, five underground dams and two reservoirs and 167 distribution systems will be made available. Moreover, 74 springs will be rehabilitated. Every effort will be made to hold back run-offs in 80 reservoirs, each with 8,000 cubic metres of water.

Construction brigades were set up to help in the development of the new villages. The main function of these teams is survey of villages, farms and in-farms roads. Plots have been cleared for farms and airstrips have also been constructed at many of the rehabilitation centres. Seven construction brigades will work on 14 medium-sized dams which are expected to be ready for irrigation purposes very soon.

Production of cash crops and livestock development are to be intensified. The objective of these schemes is to boost foreign exchange earnings lost earlier because of the drought conditions. The Government has made budgetary allocations to finance these activities, but these funds have to be supplemented by assistance from the international community if the objectives are to be fully realized.

Human Rehabilitation: The Development of Settlement Schemes

The problems that Ethiopia has been facing due to population density, both of people and animals, in many highland parts of the country; the over-working of the land by these people to feed themselves and their animals which has resulted in the destruction of much of the vegetation; and the erosion of the soil which makes the future for those areas very bleak – these matters have to be considered in more detail, including the measures that have been taken to overcome their negative consequences.

According to United Nations estimates, Ethiopia currently loses around 1.6 billion tons of its precious topsoil every year through wind and water erosion. This process is particularly advanced in the highlands where pressure of population has meant that fields which should have been left fallow have been repeatedly ploughed and reused, a tradition that, over a period of many years, has sucked out essential nutrients and turned good soil into infertile dust.

Another harmful practice in the north has been the farming of marginal lands – for example on exposed slopes. Here, once the protective vegetation cover has been removed, the thin topsoils have simply been washed away.

Deforestation, again largely a consequence of excessive population pressure, has also been a major factor – since trees play a vital role in retaining friable soils. A century ago about 44 per cent of Ethiopia was forested; however the incessant search for fuelwood and construction timber by the ever-burgeoning population meant that, by 1950, the forest area had been reduced to 16 per cent. Today it is down to just 4 per cent – all of which is in the south; the north is completely bald.

A final cause of erosion has been, at least until very recently, consistently poor and unplanned management of water resources. This meant, according to Oxfam, that:

> Water cascaded off the bare slopes at high speed, washing topsoil indiscriminately off the land during the rainy season; while in the drought there was no reservoir from which to irrigate crops. The rain also washed loose stone and boulders, once anchored by tree roots, from the hilltops down

into the fields below, making the land more difficult to work and further decreasing its fertility. What protective vegetation remained after every available hectare had been cultivated was grazed and trampled to extinction.

No account of the RRC's work would be complete which did not discuss the various resettlement and land-reclamation programmes undertaken in recent years. The rehabilitation schemes being implemented to solve these human and environmental problems require further elaboration.

The population distribution in Ethiopia is very uneven and closely follows the topography of the country. The density ranges from 10 persons per square kilometre in the lowland areas to well over 50 persons per square kilometre in the central highlands.[16] The country's climatic condition is affected by altitude rather than latitude. In spite of their tropical location, the highland areas of Ethiopia enjoy a congenial climate compared to the lowlands, and are normally well watered and relatively free from excessively high temperatures. The lowland areas, on the other hand, are characterized by high temperatures and low rainfall, and they are generally infested with human and animal diseases.

The massive concentration of population in the highlands, coupled with years of poor agricultural practices, overgrazing and deforestation have resulted in depleted soil conditions, making large areas of land agriculturally unproductive. Ethiopia, whose economy is mainly based on subsistence agriculture and is in the grip of drought, has to give serious consideration to all alternatives in its search for lasting solutions to its problems. The policy adopted and followed by the Revolutionary Government to move out part of the population to productive areas will not only make those drought victims self-supporting, but will also give the degraded lands time to be rejuvenated. Furthermore, this programme will enable lands which have been underutilized, or not exploited at all, to be turned to profitable use. It is also the policy of the Government to consider and design viable programmes for the nomadic populations of the lowlands, who also suffer from overgrazing problems and recurrent droughts.

To this end, until the establishment of the Settlement Authority (SA) in 1976, there was no single institution charged with carrying out settlement programmes and conservation of natural resources. The Ministry of National Community Development, the Institute of Agricultural Research, Welaita (formely Welamo) Agricultural Development Unit, and other government and private organizations including missionary ones, were some of the agencies that had carried out limited settlement programmes for different purposes before the establishment of the SA. A total of 20,000 family heads were settled in various parts of the country by these organizations between 1960 and 1974,[17] their dependents following when accommodation had been prepared. The limited and varying legal rights granted by the old regime to some of these institutions and the absence of official settlement guidelines to be followed by missionary and other organizations indicate how little importance was attached to settlements during those years. The absence of policy guide-lines, along with the existing land-tenure systems which discouraged the use of land for settlement schemes were the main reasons why those early settlement programmes achieved so little.

The Settlement Authority established in February 1976, and subsequently merged with the Awash Valley Development Agency and the RRC in 1979, was thus the first institution in Ethiopia to formulate clear-cut settlement policies and programmes. Peasants with no land or insufficient land to cultivate, the urban unemployed/underemployed and nomads/semi-nomads were to be settled. The Authority was further charged to conserve forest, soil and water resources in consultation with appropriate government agencies and to 'utilize lands that remain idle for various reasons.'[18] Accordingly, the 28 settlements with a population of 12,990 family heads which used to come under the umbrella of different organizations were transferred to the responsibility of the SA in 1976.

TABLE 16

Background and Distribution of Settlers (1976)

Background of Settlers	No. of Settlers (family heads)	Percentage
Urban unemployed	5,554	43
Peasants possessing no or little land	2,999	23
Nomads	2,429	18
Agricultural labourers	1,161	9
Charcoal producers and retired soldiers	847	7
Total	12,990	100

Source: Compiled from Sahle Mariam Moges' *Land Settlement as a Rural Development Policy* (1982), p.103.

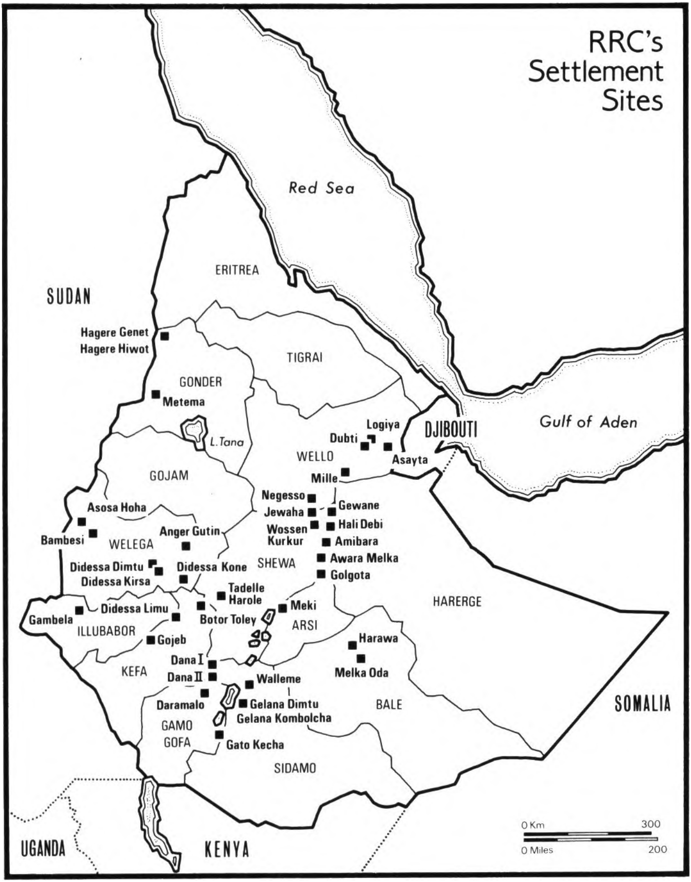
As shown in Table 16, of the 12,990 family heads, 43 per cent were urban unemployed and 23 per cent were peasants. It has to be noted, however, that most of these urban unemployed and peasants were settled by the then Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, immediately after the proclamation providing for the nationalization of rural lands.

Between 1976 and 1979 the SA settled 30,298[19] additional family heads and its cultivated areas reached 21,981 hectares with a total production of 22495 metric tons[20] of various crops. The number of settlement sites rose from 28 to well over 80 during this period.[21]

The Awash Valley Development Agency, on the other hand, which was established by the ousted regime for the purpose of letting land on a concessionary basis for commercial farmers along the Awash River, had settlement programmes for the Afars of the area. Through this programme 5,119 Afar family heads were settled with a cultivated area of 11,092 hectares, cotton being the major crop.[22] The RRC's early settlement and rehabilitation programmes were conducted in many regions of the country in collaboration with various branches of the Government. These included the Institute of Agricultural Research, the Ethiopian Project Implementation Department (EPID), the Awash Valley Authority (AVA), and others.

Most of the RRC's early rehabilitation schemes concentrated on the drought-affected areas of Wello, Tigrai, Eritrea, northern Shewa and the drought-affected and war-damaged parts of the Ogaden. In the Ogaden, the RRC started settlement programmes at various localities along the 220-kilometre stretch of land extending from Emi to Mustahil on the banks of the Wabe Shebelle river. The Emi, West Gode, Gode proper, Kellafo, Mustahil and other Shebelle settlements were approaching self-sufficiency in 1977 when the invading Somalian forces overran that part of Ethiopia and destroyed all those schemes.

No new settlements were started after the merger. Activities mostly concentrated on the further strengthening of the on-going settlement schemes, the maximization of output with minimum input and the pursuance of land-reclamation programmes, both in new settlements and in those parts of the country where land has suffered from overuse. The Commission runs a total of 83 settlements in all the administrative regions of the country, except Gojam and Tigrai. The total settlement population as at the last quarter of 1984 was around 200,000.[23]



RRC's Settlement Sites

Red Sea
Gulf of Aden
SUDAN
ERITREA
TIGRAI
DJIBOUTI
GONDER
WELLO
GOJAM
WELEGA
SHEWA
HARERGE
ILLUBABOR
ARSI
KEFA
BALE
GAMO
GOFA
SIDAMO
SOMALIA
UGANDA
KENYA
L. Tana
Hagere Genet
Hagere Hiwot
Metema
Logiya
Dubti
Asayta
Mille
Negesso
Jewaha
Gewane
Wossen
Kurkur
Hali Debi
Amibara
Awara Melka
Golgota
Asosa Hoha
Bambesi
Anger Gutin
Didessa Dimtu
Didessa Kirsa
Didessa Kone
Tadelle
Harole
Gambela
Didessa Limu
Botor Toley
Meki
Gojeb
Harawa
Melka Oda
Dana I
Dana II
Walleme
Daramalo
Gelana Dimtu
Gelana Kombolcha
Gato Kecha
0 Km
300
0 Miles
200

Up to the beginning of the last quarter of 1984, the RRC settlement schemes fell into two categories: Low Cost and Special. These were further subdivided into Rain-Fed Low Cost, Irrigated Low Cost, Rain-fed Special and Irrigated Special. Low Cost Settlement Schemes (LCSS) were generally established on developed and nationalized lands where heavy capital input and, in most cases, mechanization were not required for development. Instead, oxen and other minimum inputs such as farm hand-tools were provided to the settlers, most of whom had once been peasants or agricultural labourers. The number of settlers in a unit in LCSS, unlike that of Special Settlement Schemes (SSS), is determined by available land in a given area.

Special Settlement Schemes, on the other hand, involve the use of light and heavy machinery. As the activities include heavy clearing of forest, developing irrigation structures and bringing large areas of virgin land into production, these schemes require heavy capital investment. Along with land and settlers' labour, the RRC's other inputs to SSS include trained manpower, tractor services, seeds, pesticides and fertilizer. The settlers came from various backgrounds; the town dwellers of Harole Tadele, Shewa region, and the drought-victims in Assosa, Welega region, are some examples.

Any unit in an SSS is given arable land totalling 1,520 hectares – 1,000 hectares for communal crops, 50 hectares for homesteads, 135 for forestry, 200 for grazing, 30 for village facilities, 70 for soil and water conservation and 35 for seed and seedling production. Such a unit consists of 500 heads of families, who are chosen on the basis of their age, physical fitness and willingness not only to settle but also to follow the rules and regulations issued by the RRC, along with acceptance of the basic principles of producers' cooperatives.[24]

To be economically viable, SSS should comprise a minimum of five units of 500 settlers each. The previous trend, however, was that in some cases these requirements were not met because of shortages of land, lack of proper planning and other reasons.

Social services, including health, education and water supply, are provided for the settlers in both schemes. In addition, infrastructure, such as access roads, stores, clinics, workshops, offices, cooperative shops and tractor shelters are made available. In its extension and training programme, appropriate technology for cooperative development and other skills are also provided by the Commission.

In line with the continuing policy of strengthening the on-going settlement activities, 6,181 new family heads from the drought-affected areas of Wello and Tigrai were transferred to Welega, Bale and Gonder, while 21,259 dependents from the drought-affected areas of Wello and Tigrai were moved to Welega, Bale and Harerge to join the heads of their households.[25]

Settlers under the regular settlement schemes were from different backgrounds, including the urban unemployed, peasants with no or little land, nomads, drought victims and others. The urban unemployed participated to a greater extent in these settlement programmes until 1978; in 1979 and thereafter, drought-victims made up the largest segment of the settler population, as indicated in Tables 16 and 17. By 1981, about a year after the amalgamation of the three organizations, the total number of settler family heads rose from 12,900 to 40,123, of whom 38.7 per cent were drought victims.

The composition of the settler population shows the priority given by the Government to people who had been destitute and short of food; a better life with greater opportunities awaited them in the more fertile areas. The tables do not include the people who had been in relief settlement programmes until being displaced by the Somalian military invasion in Bale, Sidamo and Harerge.

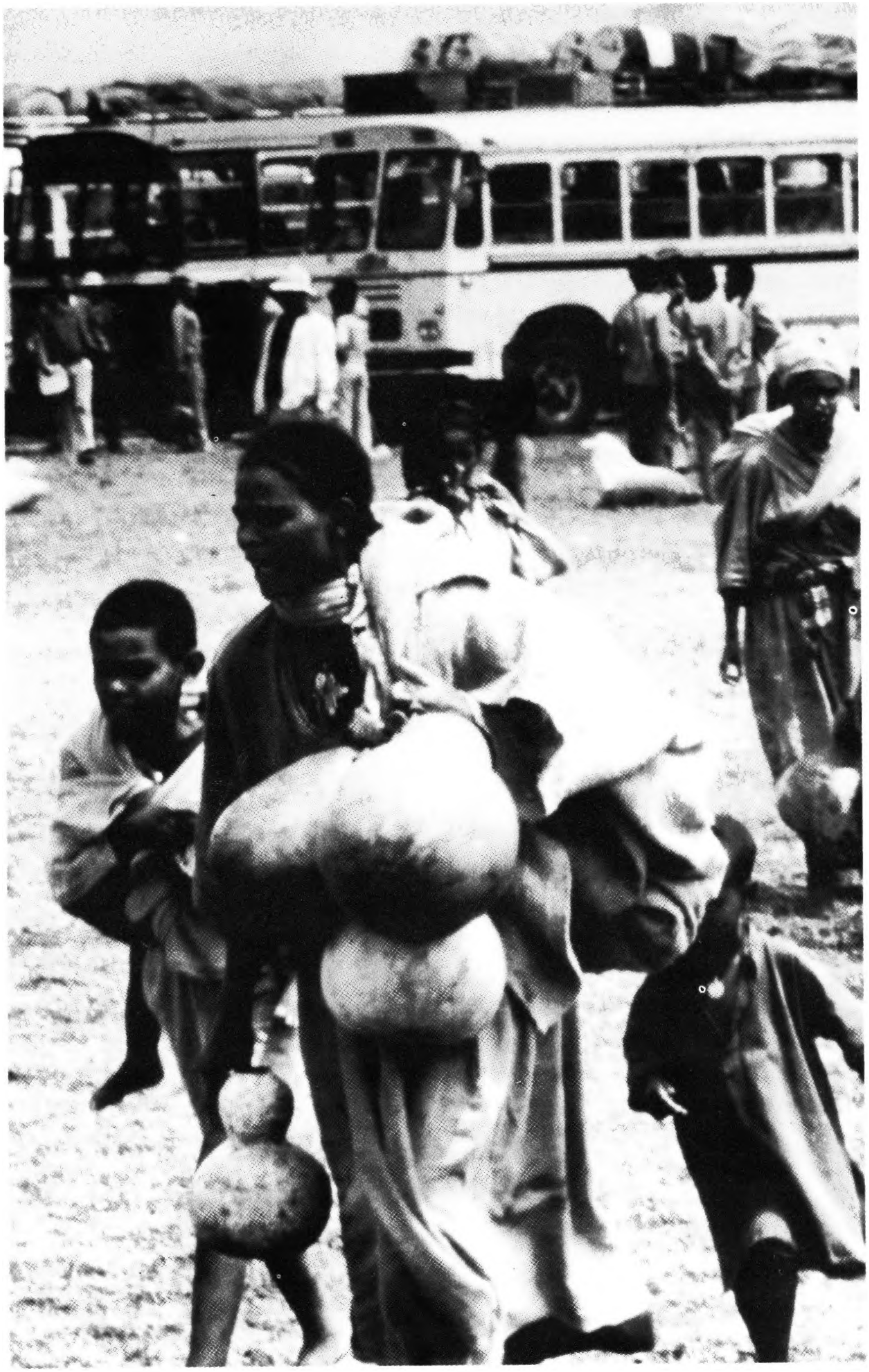
TABLE 17
Background and Distribution of Settlers (March 1981)

Background of Settlers	No. of Settlers (family heads)	Percentage
Natural disaster victims (Drought-affected)	15,523	39
Nomads and pastoralists	10,595	26
Urban unemployed	8,000	20
Peasants with little or no land	6,003	15
Total	**40,121**	**100**

Source: RRC, *Short Introduction to the RRC* (Amharic Brochure), March 1981.

Settler Participation

The part played by the settlers in the building of their new settlements begins with the construction of their own dwelling units on chosen village sites. Each settler is given 1,000 square metres of land to be used for backyard gardening, poultry production and the building of a house with locally available materials. The settlers are drawn into all



Dependents on their way to rejoin resettled family heads.

aspects of settlement work, ranging from land clearance and ploughing to brick-making and agricultural development schemes. It is believed that their full participation in all these activities will instill in them a sense of loyalty to their neighbours and a strong attachment to the settlement, the activities of which they will gradually oversee and govern themselves.

Enthusiasm and hard work have been expected from the settlers in their new surroundings, but all-out support is given to them so that they can adapt to the new way of life, the new methods of agricultural production, ways of conserving soil, looking after equipment and a multitude of other chores which it is hoped will improve their lot and raise their morale. The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission does not, however, expect all the settlers to reach the stage of self-sufficiency within a short period of time. The adaptation process is complicated and requires understanding, but experience shows that the programmes being pursued by the Commission to help settlers become self-sufficient are on the right track.

The economic basis of the RRC's settlements is agricultural production. The success of the whole strategy depends on the extent to which the new arrivals become in due course competent farmers able to produce and harvest a variety of crops. Just how important the Commission considers its agricultural programmes to be is reflected in its provision of such inputs as skilled manpower for initial training, tractor services, improved seeds, fertilizers, and so on. Trials of various crops for their suitability to local conditions, information about the best times for tilling and planting, how and when to weed, comparison of various plant strains – the purpose of this approach is to develop a technical awareness in the settlers and a scientific attitude.

The total area cultivated in all the settlements together reached 51,710 hectares in 1982 while the maximum crop production was 46,857 metric tons in 1981. The produce was valued at Birr 38,895,957 at 1981 prices. As shown in Table 18, some 178,692 metric tons of various crops valued at Birr 123,044,000 were produced in all the settlements between 1979 and 1983.

Table 18 also shows that 39,841 hectares of land were under fibre crops from 1979 to 1983. In areas where the RRC is carrying on its settlement schemes with the use of irrigated agriculture, production of cereal crops has proved to be extremely expensive. The Commission's alternative, therefore, is to raise cash crops suitable to the area

TABLE 18 **Settlements' Agricultural Production**

Production and Value in Birr (April 1984)

	Cultivated Area/ha.				Production in MT				Value in Birr			
Year	Grain	Fibre Crop	Oil Seeds	Total	Grain	Fibre Crop	Oil Seeds	Total	Grain	Fibre Crop	Oil Seeds	Total
1979	14,096	7,822	63	21,931	9,234.9	13,226.3	33.5	22,494.7	2,662,421	15,077,982	36,180	17,776,583
1980	23,664	8,752	800	33,216	15,572.6	15,842.2	407.7	31,832.5	5,243,294	18,060,108	404,316	23,707,718
1981	23,901	5,179	1,869	30,949	17,942.3	28,460.5	453.9	46,856.7	6,041,775	32,444,970	409,316	38,896,061
1982	39,850	8,537	3,323	51,710	26,603.6	16,038.2	414.9	43,056.7	11,061,800	18,233,542	448,092	21,983,440
1983	32,258	9,551	1,720	43,529	22,216.5	11,774.3	460.2	34,451.0	6,760,480	13,422,702	497,016	20,680,198
Total					91,569.9	85,341.0	1,770.2	178,691.6	34,009,770	97,239,310	1,794,920	133,044,000

Source: Compiled from replies to questionnaire received by Research and Special Studies Services from the Agricultural Technology Dept. of the RRC.

to finance the purchase of grain and other needed items. Production of these fibre crops in those areas will also partially meet the needs of the settlers' cottage industries.

Modern livestock production, bee-keeping, poultry raising and cottage industries are some of the activities whereby settler income has been augmented. In addition, settlers are given training in the running of cooperatives, book-keeping, farm machinery, home economics, crop protection, soil and water conservation, and other disciplines.

Settlement Strategies

Ethiopia has been obliged to learn quickly from its settlement experiences and, in line with changing conditions, has developed viable policies. We learned early the importance of keeping dependence on heavy machinery such as tractors and combine harvesters to the absolute minimum because shortages of spare parts and lack of operations skills have been serious handicaps which have impeded realization of the RRC's settlement objectives in the past.

During 1983-84, the Commission designed four new strategies for its settlement operations. Programmes whose objectives are to provide nomads with modern know-how of livestock production, and to encourage them to grow crops to supplement their consumption of cow's, goat's and/or camel's milk are also part of the new approach to improving their lot. The new settlement strategies as developed up to 1984 are outlined below; while a detailed account of the increased importance of settlements in the light of the 1984-85 drought will be given in the next chapter.

Conventional Settlement

Conventional settlements envisage the settling of people on lands which have hitherto been unused but whose development potential has been proven through vigorous study. According to the new strategy, Government input includes modern farm machinery for clearing and ploughing for the first two years, one hectare per family each year, until two hectares of virgin land per settler family are developed. Then, the tractor service discontinues and the whole operation is replaced by draught oxen. It is assumed that by the third year the settlers would become self-sufficient and Government support would discontinue altogether. The programme is intended for those settlers who have been affected by natural and man-made calamities and partly for the urban unemployed, with a total of 250 family heads on one unit of such a settlement. The establishment of a coordination office, whose purpose is to manage five units, is planned. The office is set up a year before the settlement programme is launched.

Catchment Rehabilitation

This scheme aims to apply soil and water conservation techniques on the steep slopes and on land highly eroded due to earlier mismanagement of the soil and forest covers. One advantage of this scheme is that settlers will not be moved out of their areas of origin and will be provided with equipment for land reclamation and with oxen to enable them to work on their original holdings. The idea here is also to minimize cultural and physical problems which may arise when settlers are moved to new areas and at the same time to provide them with additional means of production in order to help them to rehabilitate the land.

Integration Settlement

Different studies undertaken have revealed that a number of peasant associations, especially in the south and south-west, have pockets of under-utilized land due to their low density of population. It has, therefore, become necessary to increase the agricultural labour force by bringing in farmers with inadequate and degraded land holdings in the drought-prone regions as well as the unemployed who had migrated from the rural to urban areas. According to this strategy, the Commission will supply these people with food, oxen, seeds and fertilizer for a period of one year, by which time they are expected to be self-sufficient.

Spontaneous (Low Cost) Settlement

Under this scheme, tractor services will not be provided by the Commission but, instead, surveying services, oxen, small hand tools and shelter, drinking water and health facilities will be furnished. Settlers under this programme thus mainly receive self-sufficiency packages.

All the services will be offered to the settlers for a year, after which time they will be incorporated in the National Agricultural Extension Programme. This programme will mainly involve farmers who are willing to move to new areas with their means of production and start a new life. Care is taken in the selection of areas for the settlements under the programme. The ability to be cleared by hand is a prerequisite.

Nomadic Settlement Programme

This programme was developed in order to provide nomads with know-how of modern livestock production and then enable them to produce crops for their consumption. The programme of nomadic settlement will be established with the aim of training settlers on 1.5 hectares each. Of the 1.5 hectares allocated, one hectare is earmarked for range development and 0.5 hectares for crop production. The assistance is targeted to continue for three consecutive years when settlers are expected to have reached the stage of self-sufficiency.

Environmental Rehabilitation: Conservation and Reclamation

The need for land reclamation and conservation has arisen from the continued destruction of vegetation, improper use of land and the increase in both human and animal populations.

Ethiopia, like other Sudano-Sahelian countries of Africa, is in the grip of severe ecological imbalance and land degradation, and these problems threaten both highland and lowland parts of the country. The Ethiopian Government, understanding the seriousness and urgency of the problem, established a Land Use Planning Department in the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with the UN Development Programme in 1979. Between 1979 and 1981, with directives from this Department, the Departments of Forestry and Soil and Water Conservation carried out massive reafforestation and soil and water conservation programmes. The Government has gone further and is encouraging institutions and individuals to rebuild and maintain the ecology of the country. Seedlings were and still are being distributed free of charge and a programme to persuade the public of the importance of conserving natural resources is being carried out in earnest.

For its part, the RRC has, directly or through other institutions, been closely monitoring afforestation and soil and water conservation programmes in the drought-stricken areas. Through food-for-work programmes, peasants have been carrying out land reclamation activities, and with the use of funds from sources of finance such as the World Bank and donor governments such as those of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands and others, appropriate institutions have been built up in the area. With the help of these institutions, research is being carried out and demonstrations given to instil an awareness of the proper use of land. As in many other fields, however, aid is urgently needed to help Ethiopia help itself. An illustration of this is that a number of successful land reclamation projects such as Kobo-Alamata and Sirinka, the aim of which is to teach farmers to boost their productivity while at the same time conserving natural resources, are now stalled due to lack of adequate funds.

The RRC's Kobo-Alamata project, set up in 1977 with assistance from the Federal Republic of Germany, involves 47 peasant associations which have been working on infrastructural, agricultural and general rural development programmes.[26] A major achievement along these lines has been the distribution of 80 metric tons of maize and green pea seeds to 20,523 farmers, as a result of which the farmers' yields increased remarkably. The project has also trained more than 88,818 farmers' wives in the practicalities of rural development, as well as constructing 61 garages and 41 toilets.[27]

Since 1979-80 the project has sprayed 99 metric tons of pesticides and 43 metric tons of anti-rodent poison, 43,377 farmers having been provided with the anti-rodent poison; 21,060 houses have been sprayed with insecticide; various cattle diseases have been identified and the cattle subsequently vaccinated. Likewise, a total of 36 water wells with hand pumps with a daily capacity of 40,000 litres have been put into service. Despite all these positive developments, however, the project will not be able to continue, least of all at optimum efficiency, without financial support and other inputs from the international community.

The Sirinka project, launched in Wello in 1977, has been attempting to determine the most cost-effective way of rehabilitating the highly degraded north-eastern escarpment of the country through integrated land-use practices. Forty thousand inhabitants of the area have benefited from this project which covers 370 square kilometres of land and includes the reafforestation of 2,000 hectares in the catchment area. Other activities aimed at reversing the effects of drought and restoring the soil's fertility are torrent control, construction of grassed waterways, soil bending and development of access roads. The World Bank, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Swedish International Development Agency have been financing these activities; however, further funds are urgently needed if the good work at Sirinka is to continue in the future.

Also in Wello, the Golina Hormat Catchment Rehabilitation Project covers 62,000 hectares and aims to reclaim the seriously eroded highlands with reafforestation programmes on 7,500 hectares of steep slopes. Raising the productivity of farmers through improved techniques of cultivation and conservation of the land, water, plant and animal resources of the area are some of the basic objectives of the project. The Government of the Netherlands and the WFP allocated US$ 10,000,000 for the project in the early 1980s. By 1985, however, there was an urgent need for renewed assistance.

The importance the RRC accords to the restructuring of the ecology of its problem areas is demonstrated by the establishment of the Land Reclamation Department within the Commission. This Department studies catchment and other areas which are seriously affected by erosion and thus require rehabilitation measures. Accordingly, studies have been completed and projects have been prepared for Tekkeze and Upper Borkena catchments and Lower Deddessa, large-scale rain-fed settlement schemes in Gonder, Wello and Welega, respectively.

In addition, the Department's activity in settlement sites includes restoring the ecological balance through proper soil and water conservation activities. Over 9 million tree seedlings were planted in different sites by the end of 1984. The building of terraces, check dams and drainage systems are among the other programmes that have been pursued by the Department to conserve the soil.

The RRC's attempts to check and later to prevent the disastrous effects of drought, and subsequently to rebuild the ecology have mainly concentrated on afforestation and soil/water conservation schemes and all available resources have been mobilized to this end. The Commission and its partners are aware that there is still a very long way to go.

Comrade Mengistu Haile Mariam with drought victims in Wello.

CHAPTER 8

THE 1984-85 DROUGHT: PHASE FIVE OF RRC ACTIVITIES

IN the second half of 1983 the *meher* rains – on which Ethiopians had been counting to reverse the losses of the previous bad seasons – proved disappointing in the extreme. According to the National Meteorological Services Agency, precipitation was down to about half of normal right across the country with no rain at all in many areas. At the same time, a greatly increased rate of surface water evaporation was noted, coupled with a reduction in underground water levels. Hitherto perennial wells and rivers dried up, and pastoralists in the lowland areas were forced to drive their herds out of the traditional grazing grounds in search of water, causing profound ecological imbalances. More than one million head of cattle perished in Sidamo province alone. Meanwhile, in the highlands, the poor rains led to a drastically reduced harvest in November 1983 and, throughout vast areas of the north, hunger became an everyday phenomenon.

In its annual synoptic report, detailing the likely outcome of the *meher* season's agricultural activities, at the end of 1983, the Early Warning System of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission predicted a worse food situation during 1984 than had occurred in 1983, with over five million people likely to be affected by food shortages. The figure regarding numbers of people affected by food shortages was to rise throughout the year.

The effects of the shortfall in national crop production after the main harvest season were compounded by the failure of the 1984 *belg* (short) rains, the slow onset of which was noted in the 1984 RRC Assistance Requirements Report, which was produced in March.[1] An Early Warning System report, produced in May, noted that 'unlike previous years, this year's *belg* rain failure has affected all regions of the country and this has resulted in the disruption of the *belg* season's agricultural activities, and delay in the agricultural activities of the *meher* (main) season.'[2]

The total failure of the *belg* rains made an already bad situation worse, and an RRC report of August 1984[3] noted that the estimated numbers of people facing food shortages had risen from just over five million to just over six million. The *coup de grâce* was delivered by the sporadic performance of the *meher* rains which started late, fell lightly if at all and, in all parts of the country, were over by the end of August 1984, a month earlier than usual. Numbers of people affected by food shortages rose from the six million mark, through the seven million mark to 7.9 million at the end of the year. After an in-depth study by an FAO Crop Assessment Mission to the country, it was predicted that Ethiopia's total crop production for 1984 would be severely curtailed, down by at least 30 per cent on an average figure of normal years, with a resultant shortfall of between 1.7 to two million metric tons. 'This,' said the FAO, 'may be roughly equivalent to the ordinary consumption of between 6.5 and eight million persons.'[4]

Appeals for Assistance

As has been noted in a previous chapter, one of the reasons for the establishment of the Early Warning System within the RRC was to put the RRC, the Government and international donor agencies in a state of preparedness regarding possible food crises, and in a state in which the RRC would immediately be able to respond with needed relief assistance, so as to minimize the effects of food shortages on those suffering from them.

Right from the first indications of a massive crop failure after the 1983 *meher* rains, which were contained in the Early Warning System's synoptic report at the end of that year, the Government and the RRC took immediate steps to deal with the situation, including appeals to the international donor community for large amounts of relief aid to contain the worsening situation. Early in 1984, the Government allocated further domestic resources to the RRC while international assistance in amounts commensurate with the numbers of people facing food shortages was awaited.

It had been recognized by the Government for some time, however, that drought and its debilitating effects would become endemic to the country unless greater amounts of relief and development assistance were forthcoming from the international community. Positive structural developments had been carried out in the country's economy since the Revolution, and much larger allocations of domestic resources had been made, but greater international assistance was still needed to complement these efforts.

As early as May 1981, for example, in a presentation to the United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, the RRC described an alarming deterioration in weather conditions in Ethiopia with rain failures and drought becoming the norm in many parts of the country. This, it was predicted, would certainly lead to famine unless swift action involving the international community was taken. 'To alleviate the suffering of the people,' the RRC admonished, 'emergency assistance such as grain, supplementary food, edible oil, drugs, vaccines, transportation and communications facilities, are urgently required.'[5] Rehabilitation and development assistance was also requested, as it was recognized that the fight against hunger could not be seen in isolation from the fight to overcome underdevelopment.

The warnings of possible disaster continued, growing in stridency and frequency, throughout 1982 and 1983: they aroused, however, only minimal international interest. In March of 1984, on the basis of predictions of numbers of people facing disaster, and with the increasing visible evidence of migrations of people from the villages, the RRC convened a meeting in Addis Ababa of all the major donor agency and government representatives. The report presented at this meeting on the growing desperate situation of millions of people was picked up by the Western media, receiving some response from the public but, other than eliciting a few pledges, was largely ignored by the donor community. During the same month RRC Commissioner Dawit Wolde Giorgis addressed the United Nations as follows:

> . . . a severe drought of unprecedented magnitude has hit the whole of Ethiopia. The grave and cumulative consequences of the persistent drought of more than a decade, in terms of loss of life, human suffering and economic set-back, are well documented and well known to this Council. Unless the situation is salvaged, and salvaged immediately, through a generous and concerted action by the international community, the widespread fears and dire warnings that the death toll may rise to truly catastrophic proportions may very well come to pass.

From this time on, at every conceivable moment, the RRC took donor agency representatives to see the worst affected areas for themselves, and attempted to persuade them to increase their assistance to a considerable extent.

There seemed still to be no response, and so, in August 1984, the RRC called another meeting of the international community. At this meeting, the following was noted:

> We have had no grain in our stocks since mid-July. The situation becomes even more grave when one sees the uncertainties of the March pledges by

> donors. Since our March appeal roughly 87,000 tonnes of grain and 8,000 tonnes of supplementary food were expected. Unfortunately, however, no shipment of the pledged food has yet been received. Despite our repeated requests to donors to push forward the arrival time of food commodities, the response is still very slow . . .

After providing a detailed outline, region by region, of the state of the 'creeping drought' that had overtaken the country, the Commission concluded that the total number of people affected was now around six million and that the *minimum* requirement for food aid for the next five months was therefore 400,000 metric tons: 'the gathering famine is approaching its height and every minute of delay means further aggravation of the problem.'[6]

In an effort to stir the international conscience, the RRC invited journalists and television crews to Ethiopia to write about and film what was happening in the drought-affected areas, and to use maximum pressure to have their articles printed and their films shown on television, in order to inform governments and the public about what was actually happening in Ethiopia and in order to elicit a proper response, especially in a year which was showing record harvests in many parts of the world. It was after some of this press and television exposure, especially the electrifying and horrifying film made by Visnews cameraman Mohamed Amin with commentary by Michael Buerk of the BBC which was shown as news all around the world, that food aid and other relief assistance began to be despatched in more significant quantities.

At a further meeting of the international community in October 1984, Commissioner Dawit referred to the RRC's concern, frustration and disappointment as the famine continued to spread, causing death and displacing people, while the international community failed to pay adequate attention. In a major statment he said:

> The pledges made after March were nowhere near our requirements, and quite a few of these pledges started arriving in Ethiopia only five months after our appeal . . . We would never be able to have an accurate estimate of the lives lost and the number of malnourished persons and displaced people caused by the irresponsible and indifferent attitude of certain governments and organizations who had the capacity to do better. It was not lack of sympathy or understanding amongst the public. It was not lack of information. Neither was it lack of food or funds because we realize that in Europe and North America the public is swimming in abundance. It could never be anything else except sheer apathy, or politicization of humanitarian aid . . .[7]

The lack of international assistance to deal with the growing famine produced a sense of shock and outrage at the avoidable waste of human life, on the part of the RRC staff and other Ethiopians who realised what was happening. The Government had treated the drought and its effects as a top national priority since the beginning of the Revolution. With the dramatic worsening of the situation from the beginning of 1984, it had set up an Inter-Ministerial Committee to facilitate the RRC's operations. Later, a National Committee for Relief and Rehabilitation was established at the highest level of the Government and Party, and assumed a coordinating role and the overall responsibility for relief and rehabilitation activities in the country; it thus enhanced and increased the capacity of the RRC, and enabled constraints to be overcome, within the limits of the nation's capabilities. The Government, in addition, had mobilized all possible resources from national down to *wereda* level, and had committed large amounts of additional funds to the fullest extent possible. Mass organizations and the Ethiopian public, both within and outside the country, had also contributed funds, their expertise and their time, in a gesture of solidarity with their affected compatriots. But the international community had remained largely silent and unresponsive.

Reviewing the past months, and appreciating the assistance that had started to be despatched, RRC Commissioner Dawit Wolde Giorgis noted the following at the December 1984 international donors' meeting:

> What makes us angry, and deeply sad at the same time, is that what is happening in many parts of the country now could so easily have been prevented. From the beginning of the year we predicted that, unless there was a massive inflow of grain, funds and other relief supplies, the situation would deteriorate appallingly . . . I cannot overemphasize the growing sense of shock that my staff and I felt when we realized that first our March appeal and then our August appeal had failed, when the days of indifference turned into the months of apathy, especially when we could see that – all around the country – our predictions were turning horribly true. An almost inconceivable nightmare was happening: Ethiopia was being forgotten by a world glutted with a surplus of grain; its humanitarian advocates had disappeared.[8]

During the same address, the RRC Commissioner noted the resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly which was at that time in session:

> The Ethiopian Government is deeply gratified to note that in an

UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar visiting a shelter in northern Ethiopia during the drought.

unprecedented move 95 governments co-sponsored the resolution which has been unanimously adopted by the Assembly.[9]

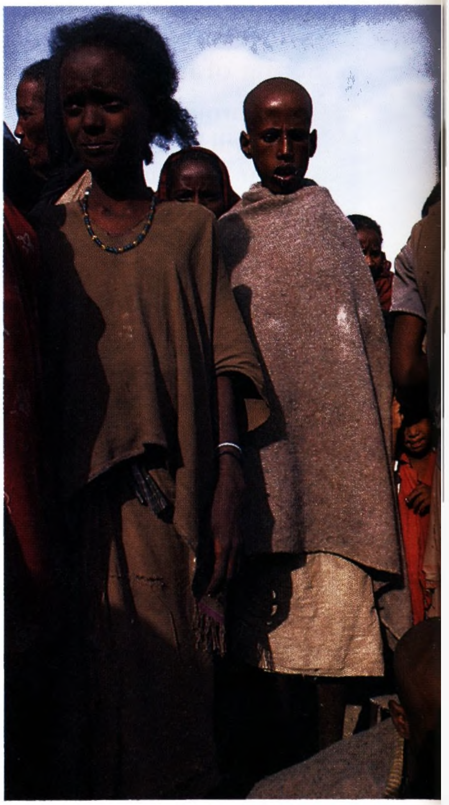
Parts of the resolution read as follows:

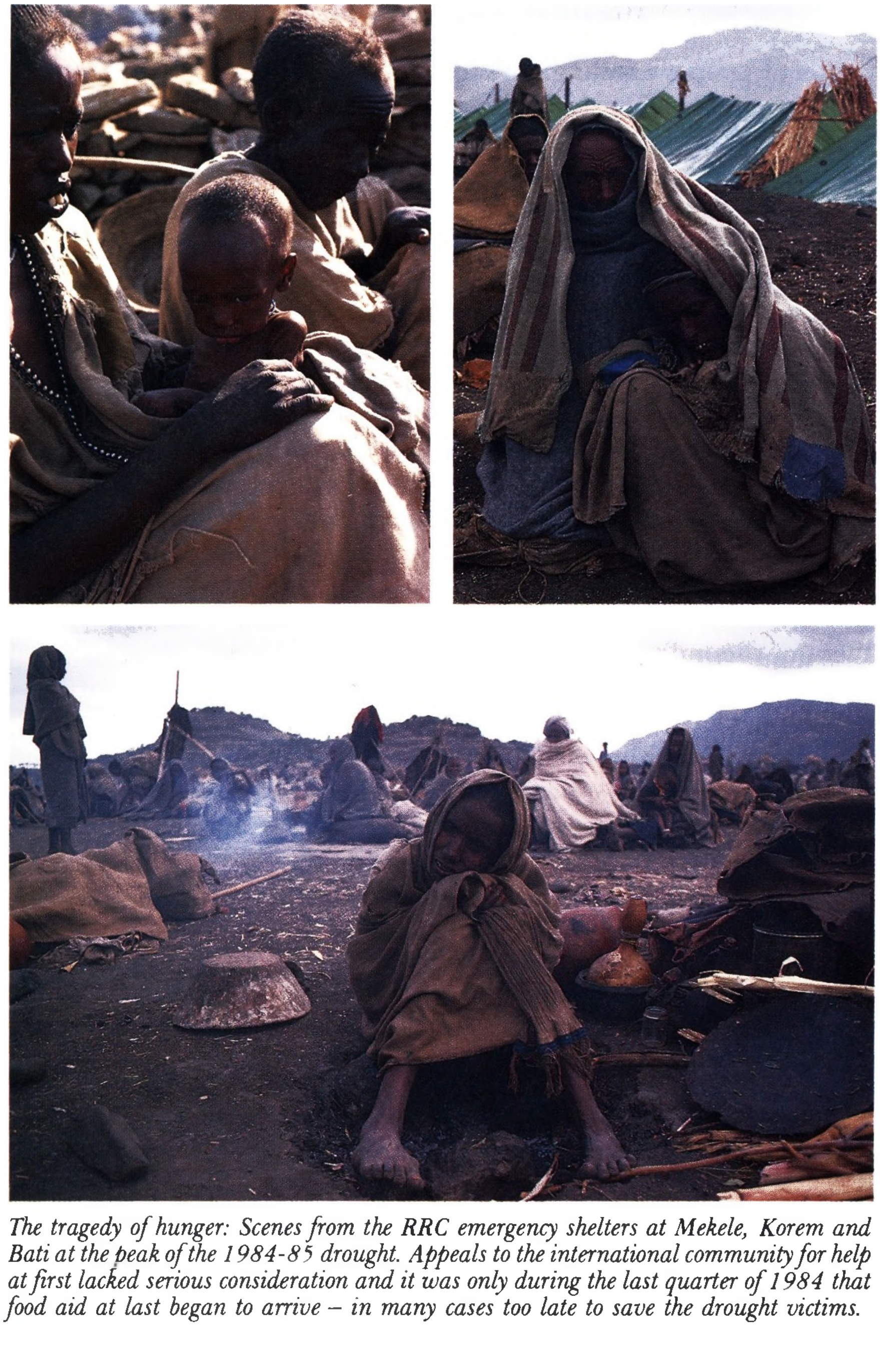
> Urges all member states, organs and organizations of the United Nations system, specialized agencies and nongovernmental organizations to assist the Government of Ethiopia in its efforts to provide for the emergency needs of the drought victims and to deal with the problem of medium-term and long-term recovery and rehabilitation.
>
> Requests the Secretary-General to continue his efforts:
>
> (**a**) To mobilize resources for relief and rehabilitation, including assistance for the victims of drought who wish to resettle in areas less prone to drought;
>
> (**b**) To apprise the Economic and Social Council, at its first regular session of 1985, of the situation of the drought victims and the response of the international community to their plight.[10]

The UN resolution stressed the need not only for relief assistance but also for recovery and rehabilitation programmes, which the Commissioner stressed as being equally important. He noted, in this gathering of international agencies:

> It is a formidable challenge in which your own development assistance efforts will have a large role to play. The Ethiopian Government, since the popular Revolution, has created the structure through which rapid development can take place. The historic implementation of land reform measures, the creation of peasants' associations, the creative development and rehabilitation thinking that has been pursued and implemented, and the priority and resources the Government has given to more permanent solutions to the problems of drought and famine, all demonstrate the resolute will to create a country which would be able to be self-sufficient in food production and to overcome the immense natural forces which have thwarted its efforts over the last 10 years. But if we are to achieve these objectives, which cannot be more over-riding for the lives of so many millions of drought-affected people, we are going to need immense development assistance from the donor community, to a degree that will entail the radical revision of the donor community's institutional and practical responses to the situation which I have already stressed. That is the challenge that confronts us, and the challenge with which I would like to present you.[11]

The electrifying and horrifying four-minute film on famine victims in Ethiopia that was transmitted as television news around the world had the power finally to release the reservoir of pent-up human sympathy in viewers across the globe. It was a wonderful testimony to the





The tragedy of hunger: Scenes from the RRC emergency shelters at Mekele, Korem and Bati at the peak of the 1984-85 drought. Appeals to the international community for help at first lacked serious consideration and it was only during the last quarter of 1984 that food aid at last began to arrive – in many cases too late to save the drought victims.

depth of people's feelings towards their fellow-men once they had been properly informed of the gravity of the situation.

The expected revision of attitudes on the part of the international community towards rehabilitation and development funding has not, however, occurred in the same manner. At an international donors' meeting held in April 1985, Commissioner Dawit Wolde Giorgis took the opportunity to reiterate this need. 'Added impetus and support should be given,' he said 'to the search for longer-term and sustained development. Unlike the assistance rendered for relief needs, the need to assist rehabilitation and development activities remains largely unfulfilled. Ethiopia still remains the recipient of the lowest per capita rate of development aid. What has not been available to date is the level of investment funding from the international community commensurate both with the country's development needs, and with the energy and ingenuity created in the last 10 years of the Revolution.'[12]

It is easy to be overwhelmed by statistics, and to lose sight within them of the individual human dimension of this immense national tragedy. Yet the fact is that much of Ethiopia, particularly the northern provinces of Tigrai and Wello, is today an uninhabitable wasteland; the rural people who used to earn their living from this dry, eroded terrain, have fled into emergency shelters set up by the RRC. What is it like to be a drought-victim? One visiting writer attempted to describe the predicament of the people whom he saw:

> On the drive from the airport into Mekalle we stopped to visit one of the many semi-permanent 'shelters' for drought-victims – a straggling tented camp pitched by the side of the road. The few thousand inhabitants, predominantly women and children, gazed disinterestedly at us with the dull resigned eyes of cattle awaiting slaughter. All seemed to be covered in a layer of dust as though they had sought to bury themselves in the unfruitful earth. Like troglodytes, those who did not have tents sat in shallow scooped-out hollows in the ground. A few mothers, clutching inert rag-draped bundles, huddled behind a makeshift windbreak of dry stone where a pale fire burned.[13]

The same writer also described his impressions of the feeding centre at Bati:

> Exhausted nurses and paramedical staff, walking wearily through this densely-packed mass of troubled people and doling out rations to those children still able to take food by mouth were clearly at the limits of their endurance, at a loss to cope with the scale and complexity of the human damage they faced.[14]

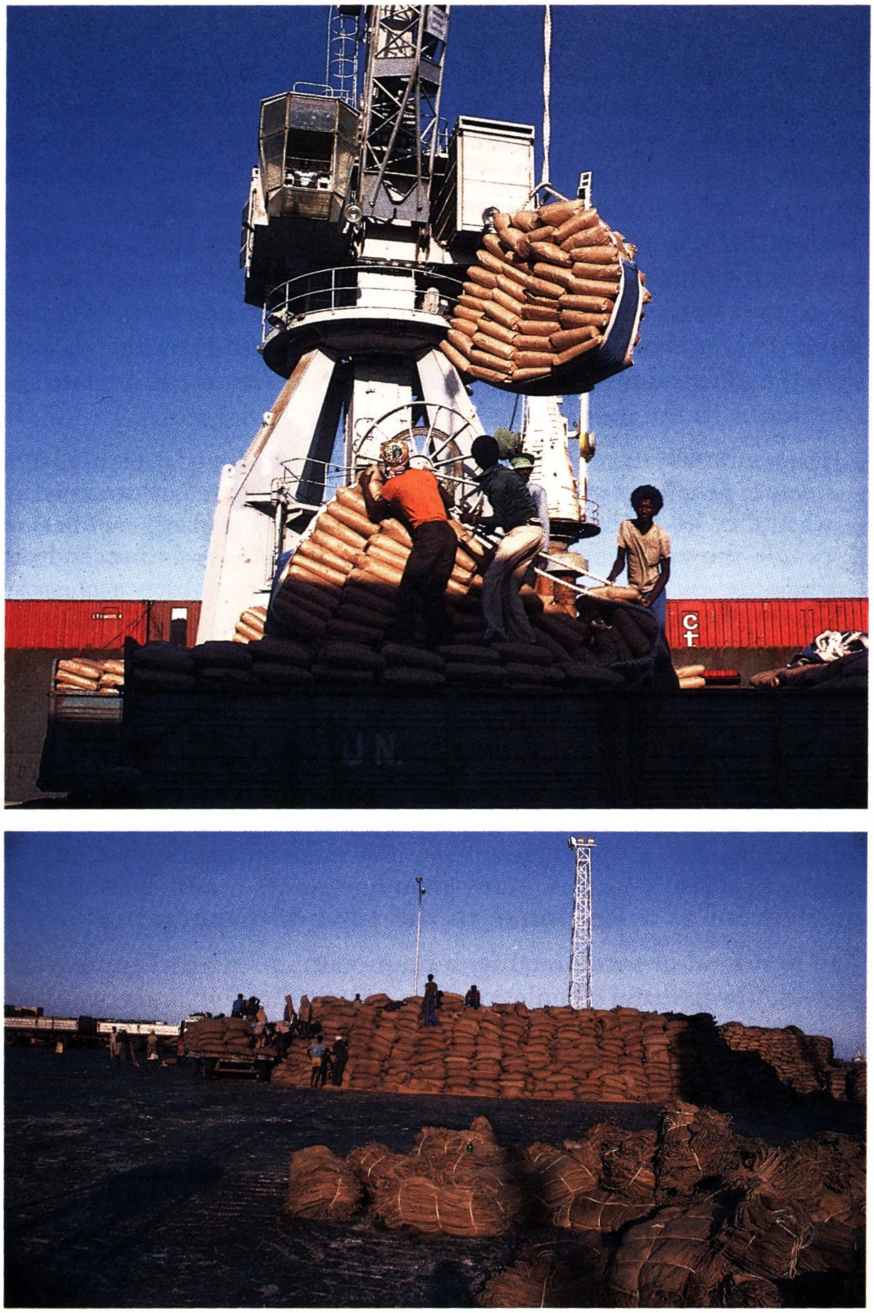
From December 1984, when shipments of relief assistance began arriving in greater quantities, until the end of May 1985, a total of nearly 520,000 metric tons of cereals and supplementary food was distributed to around six million drought-affected people in all of the needy areas of the country. In order to ensure the continuity of food distribution, stock movement at feeding and distribution points was carefully analyzed, and timely replenishment was made either from ports of discharge or central warehouses located in strategic areas such as Nazareth and Kombolcha. The management and administration of emergency food aid was closely monitored by the RRC and other directly-concerned agencies and organizations.

Apart from the distribution of essential relief supplies the RRC, in collaboration with NGOs, catered to the needs of infants, children and lactating mothers. Intensive feeding programmes were carried out in 152 feeding centres for 332,815 beneficiaries. In addition to the children and mothers assisted in special programmes, 281,027 people were treated for diseases related to malnutrition and overcrowding in the relief camps. However, common diseases in the drought-affected areas such as dysentery, eye and skin diseases continued to pose difficulties. The services of medical and paramedical personnel were thus of vital importance.

In order to reach the drought-affected in remote and inaccessible areas, a total of 62 aircraft operated from November 1984, mainly from Assab port to the major regional warehouses for onward transportation to the beneficiaries in shelters or in their villages. Up to the end of March 1985, a total of 2,951 sorties, involving 6,409 flight hours, were made by these aircraft, and 27,375 metric tons of relief goods were airlifted. The participation of these aircraft, both from domestic and international sources, made a significant contribution to stock levels, so that continuous distribution was able to be carried out. In addition to the airlifting of relief supplies, an air-dropping operation was also carried out to reach people inaccessible by road and living in areas in which it was not possible to prepare airstrips. During February and March 1985, 180 dropping sorties were made to northern Shewa, and the tonnage dropped totalled 2,639 metric tons.

Undaunted by the cruel multiplication of its problems, by the inadequacy of the support given by the international community and by the deepening of the ecological crisis that it is facing, the Ethiopian Government has rededicated itself, through the RRC, to carrying out

'Exhausted paramedical staff walking wearily through this densely-packed mass of troubled people, and doling out rations to those children still able to take food by mouth, were clearly at the limits of their endurance....'



Relief supplies unloaded at Assab port prior to distribution by air and road to the needy. From December 1984, shipments of food aid began to arrive in significant quantities at Assab and, by May 1985, more than 500,000 metric tons had been distributed to some 6 million drought affected people.

the bold measures which alone have any hope of controlling events and reversing nature's destructiveness. The rehabilitation programmes already launched are being assiduously followed through because they comprise the best possible method of transforming the country's agricultural base. It is worth mentioning at this point again the fact that it is not drought as such which causes hunger and suffering, but the poverty of the peasant farmers who, for historical reasons, have never been in a position to store food away to tide them over bad times. This analysis of Ethiopia's predicament has been cogently presented by Professor Amartya Sen in *Poverty and Famines* and related to conditions in the industrialized countries.

> The reason why there are no famines in the rich developed countries is not because people are generally rich on the average. Rich they certainly are when they have jobs and earn a proper wage; but for large numbers of people this condition fails to hold for long periods of time, and the exchange entitlements of their endowments in the absence of social security arrangements could provide very meagre commodity bundles indeed. With the proportion of unemployment as high as it is, say, in Britain or America today, but for the social security arrangements there would be widespread starvation and possibly a famine. What prevents that is not the high average income or wealth of the British or the general opulence of the Americans, but the guaranteed minimum values of exchange entitlements owing to the social security system.[15]

Settlement as a Response to the 1984-85 Emergency

The best kind of social security a poor country such as Ethiopia can provide for its rural population is to ensure that the lands on which they live are productive and capable of supporting them. The Government's plan, put into action in late 1984, to settle 300,000 families over a period of one year is a policy borne out of a thorough analysis of the sequence of natural and human events which have created dustbowls in parts of the country, undermined farm output and led to endemic food shortages. The settlement programme is designed to address all these aspects of the disaster at the same time, thereby reducing and eventually minimizing the rate at which people die from hunger and diseases associated with malnutrition.

The logic of the programme has become obvious to all individuals and organizations who have a detailed understanding of the factors at work. They are now aware of the benefits and the possibilities that were opened up when the Political Bureau of the Workers Party of Ethiopia came to the conclusion that the most seriously affected people in the barren northern regions should be moved to more fertile parts of the country. The rehabilitation of these farming families will enable them to become self-sufficient, which in turn will help to boost the nation's agricultural output.

In their recent Earthscan book entitled *Natural Disasters: Acts of God or Acts of Man?*, Anders Wijkman and Lloyd Timberlake show how, although the weather is partly to blame, human activity frequently makes the disaster worse. Quoting Robert Lamb of the United Nations Environment Programme, they note that:

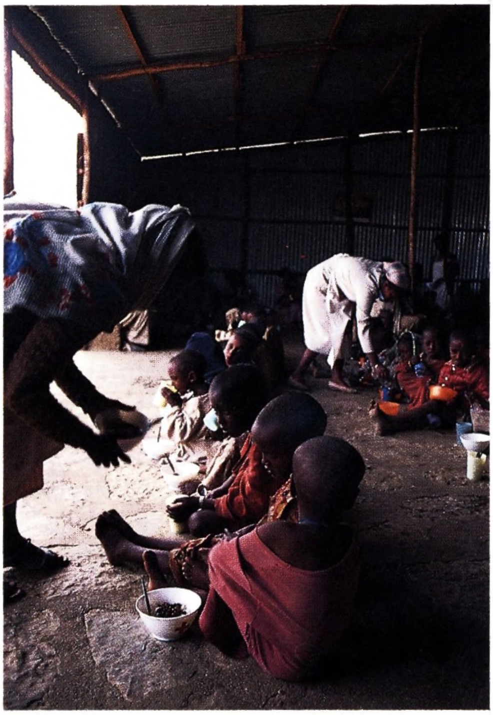
> The highlands, especially in the regions of Wello, Tigrai and Gonder have been so overfarmed, overgrazed and deforested that efforts to scrape a bare living from this land threaten to destroy it permanently . . . The situation is so desperate that the Government has begun a major resettlement scheme to transfer farmers from the highlands to underpopulated lowlands. Government officials have referred to the people to be moved as 'environmental refugees'.[16]

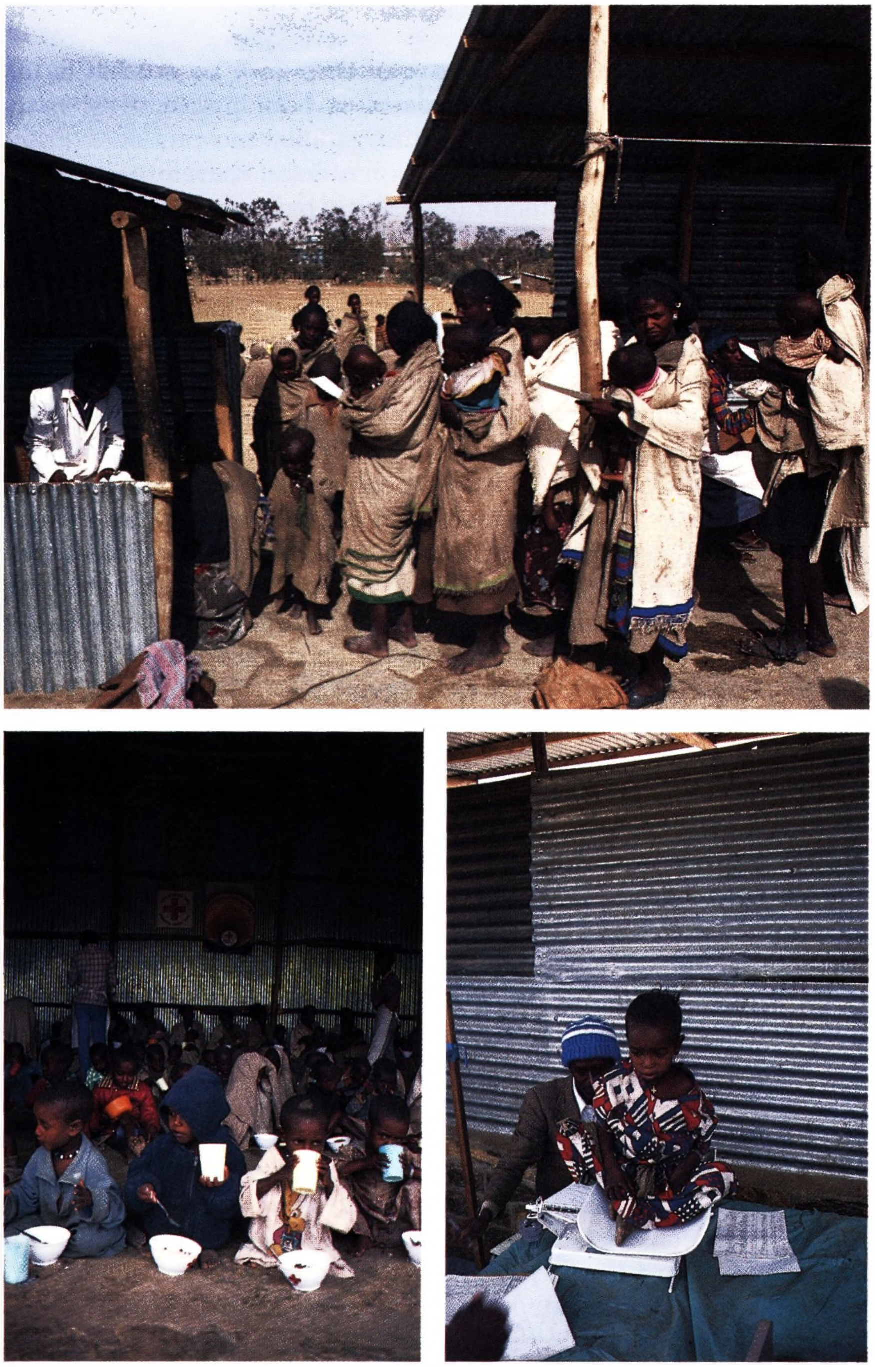
In an earlier book, published in 1982, Alan Grainger of Oxford University in England was equally emphatic:

> Drought triggers a crisis, but does not cause it. Overcultivation and overgrazing weaken the land, allowing no margin when drought arrives. The high human pressure will continue during the drought, leading ultimately to even greater and more visible damage to the land and the deaths of large numbers of animals.[17]

The peasants of the Ethiopian highlands have themselves long been aware of the wisdom of migrating from their degraded and overpopulated areas to the country's lowland regions during periods when the rains failed completely. Resettlement is a strategy which drought has in the past urged on them, thousands of households leaving their ancestral lands in an unplanned, uncoordinated manner and making for the south-western *qolla* areas (land at an altitude of between 500 and 1,500 metres, with temperatures around 30 degrees Celsius) and *dega* areas (2,300 to 3,300 metres altitude and temperatures in the 10 to 20 degrees range).

The long and gruelling march to these more fertile lands was undertaken by peasants because they knew there was for them no viable long-term alternative. With children on the backs of the women and scanty provisions slung across the men's shoulders, highlanders,





As well as distributing essential relief supplies, the RRC, in collaboration with NGOs, catered to the needs of infants, children and nursing mothers.

mainly from Tigrai and Wello, have of their own accord left farms which had increasingly become places of poor productivity, mass starvation and death, in a saga of disorganized movement.

What the Government of Ethiopia has done, therefore, is to systemize this movement which the peasants had started of their own volition. It could not stand by as large numbers of families risked death en route to a better future or when they succumbed on the new lands for want of seeds, tools, oxen and food to tide them over. Unlike the imperial regime which was swept aside because of its insensitivity to the people's plight, the Party and State stepped in with measures designed to put migration on a safer, more scientific footing.

A high-level mission, headed by Comrade Mengistu Haile Mariam, went on an extensive tour of western and south-western Ethiopia in 1984, to select suitable rehabilitation sites. Places in the *qolla* areas of Gojam, Welega, Kefa and Illubabor were chosen as prospective villages for the migrants, and a network of first-aid and feeding stations were set up along the migration route. All available buses were deployed – not only to transport those families already en route, but also those who were still preparing to leave their homes. The crucial feature of this new phase of the migration was that it was still up to the people themselves whether they went to the new land or remained on the old. The choice was theirs to make, under no pressure from any quarter whatsoever. It was only the continuing drought and the barren soils that concentrated their minds.

Another high-level mission, also in 1984, headed for the drought-stricken areas of Wello and Tigrai where it assessed the condition of the victims who were ready and willing to be rehabilitated in new locations. Few hesitated, and among these migrants were breast-feeding mothers and pregnant women, village elders and the infirm and disabled.

The resettlement scheme was to be carried out in two phases. Phase One, completed in January 1985, concerned the relocation of 50,000 households to the underpopulated *dega* areas of Kefa, Welega and Illubabor regions. Phase Two, more challenging and still under way, has as its objective the relocation in the *qolla* area of some 250,000 households, of which 150,000 have been moved so far.

To meet the immediate needs of the settlers, basic social services such as medical care, kindergartens and literacy courses have already been made available. This has been achieved by upgrading existing services in combination with new mobile units. But with an eye to the future and a more permanent network of facilities, construction brigades are now at work building clinics, schools, storage depots and access roads and installing water-supply systems as part of the infrastructure of each rehabilitation centre.

The decision by the highlanders themselves to settle the virgin lands of western and south-western Ethiopia, coupled with the Government's provision of inputs and expertise, is very much in tune with the needs of the time. Ethiopia is a country of more than 42 million people, the third largest in Africa in demographic terms. It has a relatively rich hydrography and soil structure as well as variegated flora and fauna – precisely what makes starvation in the country such a paradox.

Instead of the land being productive and bountiful, however, recurrent drought and, until recently, pitifully inadequate land management, have yielded only hunger and misery. Now is the time, therefore, to develop the *qolla* of the country, which comprises about 50 per cent of the territory. The *qolla* in western and south-western Ethiopia is drained by the silt-laden rivers of the highlands. The mean annual rainfall is 1,800mm in Illubabor, 1,700mm in Kefa, 1,600mm in Welega, and 1,000mm in Gojam. These regions all have low humidity and have in the main not been affected by desertification. Moreover, the flat terrain is perfect for irrigated agriculture and mechanized farming.

This land is there for the people to settle on and to develop. Its productivity and wealth depend greatly on the people themselves – they will have to build their own homes with materials available in the locality, mainly reeds and elephant grass. They will be informed about the advantages of irrigation and advised about how best to divert rivers and build earth dams. Until they become self-sufficient producers of crops, however, they will continue to require relief items of various kinds.

The programme of action of the National Committee for Relief and Rehabilition has made it necessary for the Government to divert equipment such as bulldozers and tractors away from conventional development projects to where they are immediately needed in rehabilitation schemes. This will, in turn, call for corresponding adjustments in the implementation of the 10-year Guideline for Economic and Social Development that was adopted by the country in September 1984. The rehabilitation has priority because it is laying the foundation for more secure and sound development in the future

MERCY FLIGHT

In order to reach the drought-affected people in remote areas, a total of 62 aircraft from many different friendly countries operated in northern Ethiopia from November 1984. By the end of March 1985, these aircraft had flown a total of 2,951 sorties and had delivered 27,375 metric tons of relief items.

for victims from the drought-affected regions as well as for the country as a whole.

The objectives of the programme are:

(a) To rehabilitate people from the drought-stricken areas to land which is more fertile. It has become impossible in the original homelands to satisfy the food needs of people and livestock.

(b) To start agricultural activities which will in due course improve to the point where the people involved become self-sufficient.

(c) To provide support services arranged by the Government and public organizations.

Phase One Details

Some 75,000 settlers have been taken to a new settlement site in Assosa, Welega region. A further 25,000 were integrated into the region's three existing farmers' associations which had hitherto been fairly sparsely populated.

Illubabor was the second region where farmers were settled, the 100,000 people involved being distributed in four areas. Another 50,000 settlers put down roots in five areas of this region – 26,000 in existing communities and 24,000 in new settlements. It was at this point that Phase One came to an end.

Phase Two Details

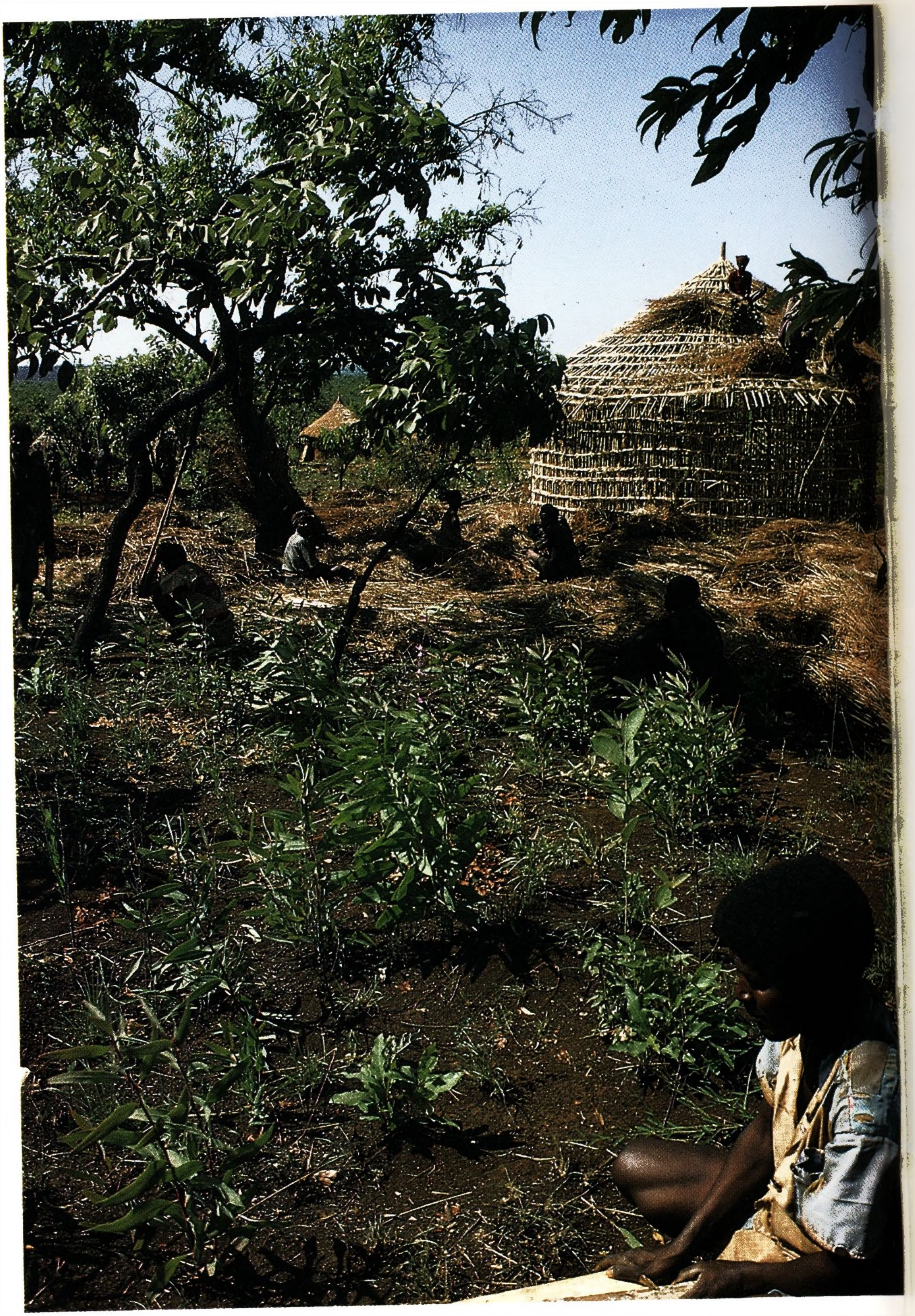
This comprises the biggest organized programme of settlement in the country in terms of which some 250,000 families from Wello, Tigrai and Gonder will move to large-scale settlement sites in five regions: Welega (two settlement sites), Illubabor (one site), Kefa (one), Gojam (one) and Gonder (one).

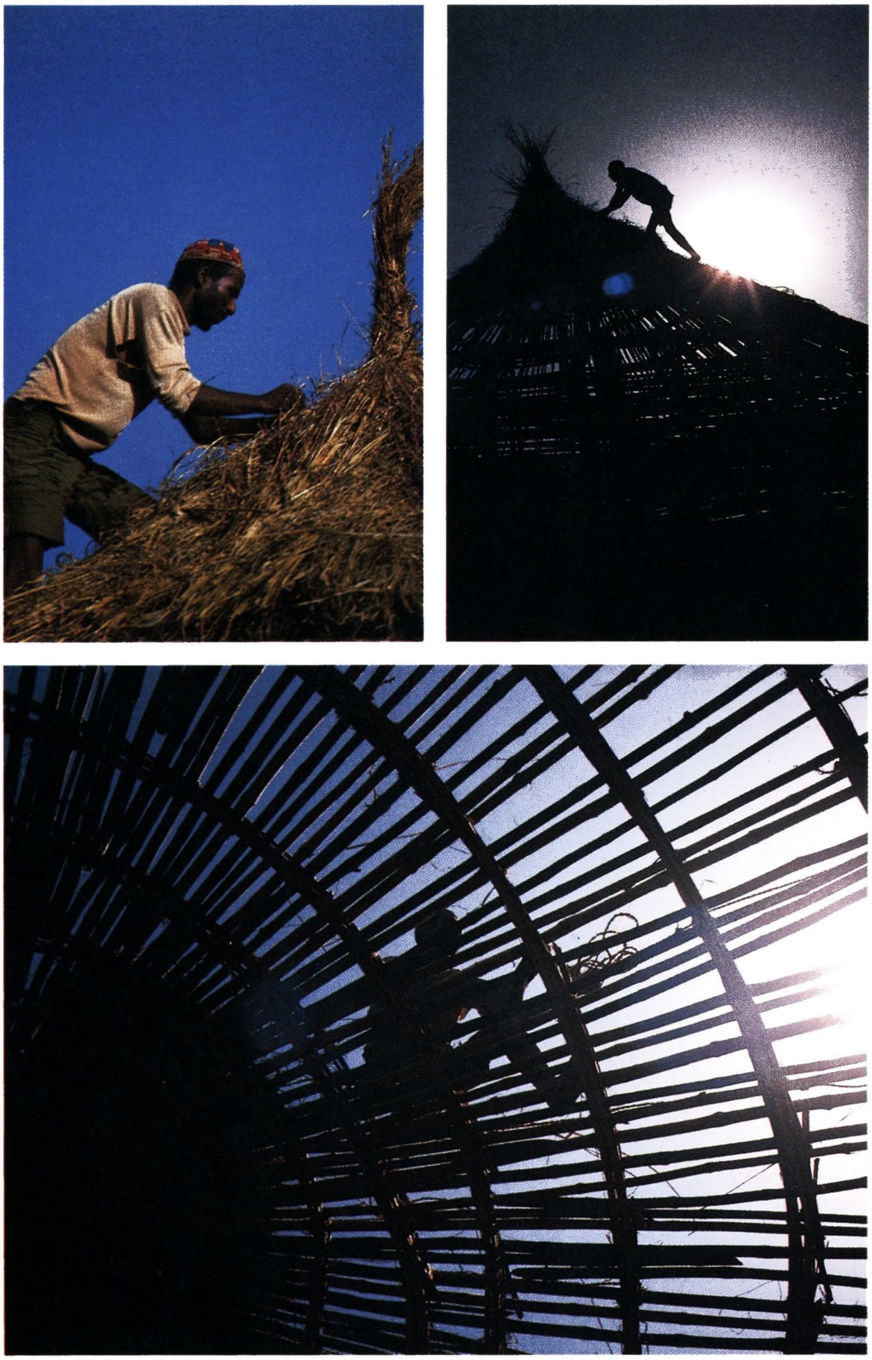
Phase One settlers are expected to produce a total of 89,000 metric tons of grain per season, initially, while those in Phase Two are scheduled to produce 455,000 metric tons.

As Table 19 (see Page 200) shows, the financial requirements are clearly quite large. By means of its austerity budget, however, the Government is determined to implement the programme with additional assistance from the international donor community.

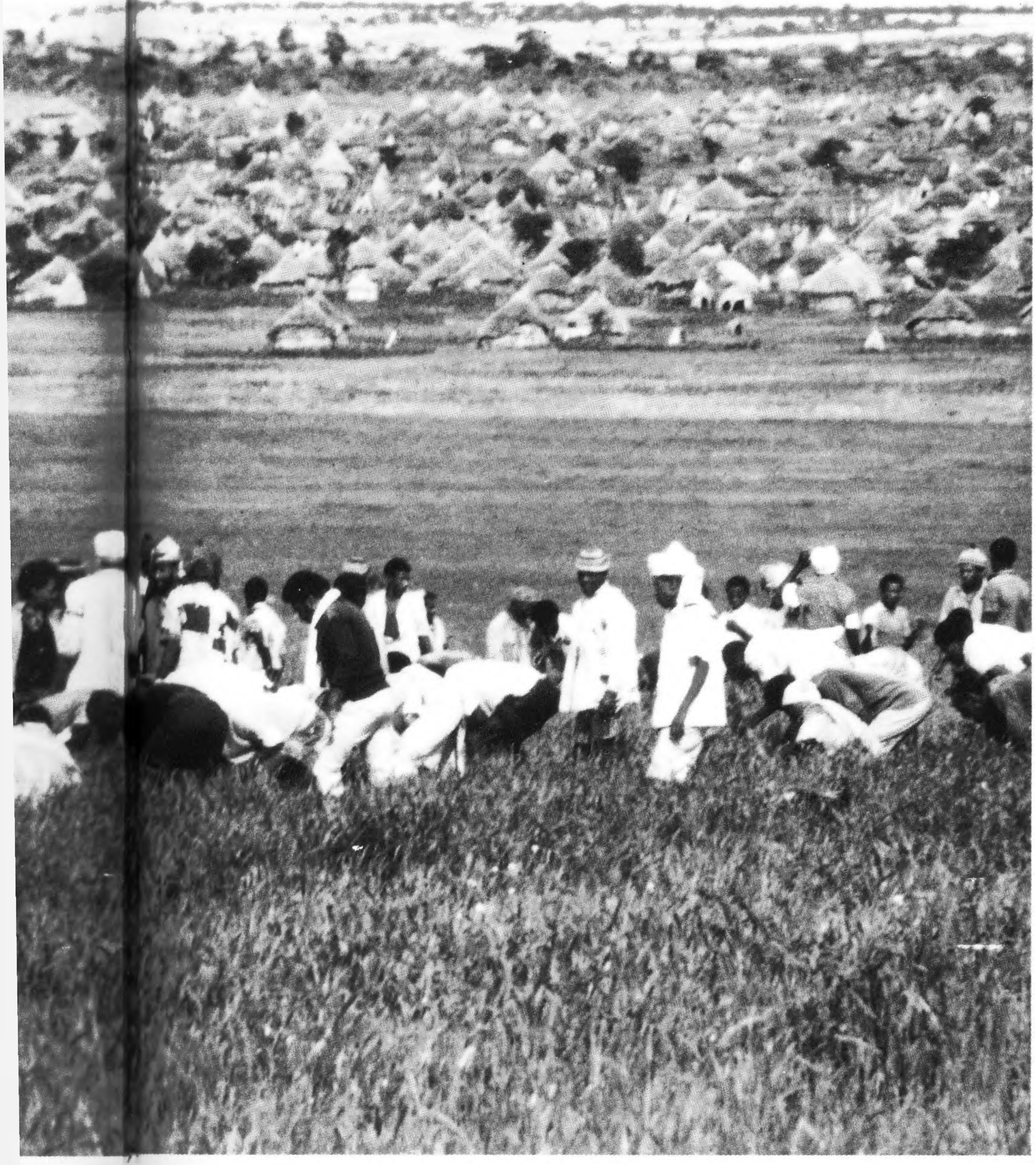
It is, indeed, vital that Ethiopia be given the opportunity to make use not only of short-term emergency aid but also of longer-term developmental assistance – and if this is to happen then several Wes-

A high-level mission headed by Comrade Mengistu Haile Mariam went on an extensive tour of western and south-western Ethiopia in 1984 to select suitable rehabilitation sites.





Homebuilding is amongst the first tasks of the new settlers and is usually carried out by family heads prior to the arrival of dependents.



The economic basis of the RRC's settlements is agricultural production. The success of the whole strategy therefore depends on the extent to which the settlers can become productive farmers harvesting a variety of crops in their new environment. This, in turn, calls for greater and more wholehearted technical and financial support from the international donor community.

Resettled children in Assosa learning practical skills as part of their education.

Left: settlers at Assosa. Mechanization of agriculture on the settlements is vital, but calls for vastly increased foreign assistance if it is to be speedily carried out.

Above: bee-keepers at Assosa. The settlement programme aims at diversified production of cash and food commodities with a view to achieving self-sufficiency in the shortest possible time.

TABLE 19
Total Financial Requirements (Excluding Settlers' Transportation Costs) for Phase One and Phase Two Programmes

Items	Phase One Expenditure (Birr)	Phase Two Expenditure (Birr)
Agricultural services, machinery	8,902,500	37,536,000
Oil and lubricants	1,035,620	4,644,600
Draught-oxen and small agricultural implements	17,349,500	86,672,500
Agricultural inputs	1,897,850	8,895,600
Salaries and per diem	1,085,200	4,767,530
Total	30,270,670	142,516,230

tern nations, amongst them Britain and the United States, must be persuaded to lift what virtually amounts to a ban on long-term aid to Ethiopia, and notably to the resettlement programme within Ethiopia.

In a statement made at a meeting of the international donor community in Addis Ababa in December 1984, the Commissioner of the RRC, Dawit Wolde Giorgis, discussed this particular point in some detail. 'We do not accept,' he said, 'the distinction made by many donors between humanitarian aid and development aid: there is nothing more humanitarian, in our minds, than to give people constantly affected by drought the chance to lead peaceful productive lives in which their labour will not be wasted by the vagaries of nature, and in which they will not need to remain dependent, year after year, on relief handouts from the Commission.'[18]

Nothing has changed, as at August 1985, to weaken the validity of the Government's resettlement programmes. These programmes need, however, investment on a massive scale, for only rapid development of the country's agriculture, only rapid rehabilitation of the peasants and their environment, will prevent the occurrence of a famine worse than any yet witnessed in Ethiopia. We need assistance to become self-sufficient in food production. We need assistance to plan for development with drought as an ever-present possibility. We need assistance to master the forces of nature, so as to stop being their perennial victims.

For these reasons, Ethiopians were dismayed in 1984 and 1985 by the misconceived and, at times, apparently malicious response expressed by some of the international media and by some Western political figures to the resettlement programme. The appeal of this book, and of the Ethiopian people, is that this blind prejudice against us should be dropped. Given the inputs that we need, inputs that the international community could so easily supply if it wished, Ethiopia could rapidly overcome the development challenges that it faces, for it has the potential not only to feed itself but also much of the rest of the region as well.

In the most remote areas, where the overland route is long and slow, it is often necessary to air-drop emergency relief supplies.

CHAPTER 9

DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

THE reason for the presence in Ethiopia of members of the international donor community, and the reason why facilities are made available to the innumerable journalists from many parts of the world to write about and film the tragedy now taking place in our country, is *to mobilize resources so that action can be taken on behalf of those struck by disaster.*

The RRC has infrastructure through which the distribution of assistance can be implemented. The Government has provided the RRC with much increased resources to fulfill its responsibilities. What has been needed from the international donor community over the past year, and what will be needed over the coming years, is a similar commitment, within the limits of its enormous resources, to prevent a catastrophe developing from what *Newsweek* magazine described as 'the worst drought in a century'.[1]

What the donor community has not yet done is to radically revise its assessment of the present situation in Ethiopia and of the institutional arrangements it should be making to meet the requirements in time. Even at this late stage in the current tragedy, there is still time for foreign donors to make the necessary effort to meet the needs of our compatriots in the countryside. While enormous efforts have been made by the donor community in meeting the immediate relief requirements, further pledges of grain and other relief needs are required; little progress has, however, been made in providing the flow of resources required for the long-term rehabilitation programme.

It must be noted, however, that over the 10 years of the RRC's work, the support from and assistance provided by the donor community, especially in the relief field, has been very much appreciated. The public and donor response, especially during the current disaster, has been unprecedented in modern times, and magnificent. Unfortunately, adequate assistance for self-sufficiency programmes has not been forthcoming. The distinction between relief and rehabilitation programmes has been acted upon in a very one-sided way, with far more attention being paid to the meeting of the short-term needs of the drought victims than to their long-term rehabilitation requirements.

Humanitarian aid, however, ought not to be conceived of merely as relief aid. People now on the brink of starvation must be given the means to re-establish themselves in productive environments so that they need never again experience the despair and hopelessness of being without the most basic requirements for survival. The RRC is continuing to organize the voluntary movement of people from the unproductive and overused highlands of the north to fertile land in the west and south of the country, in an effort to provide them with the means to lead productive and self-sufficient lives. The previous chapter gave a detailed rationale for the resettlement programmes, but if these are to succeed the donor community will have to alter its response to these rehabilitation schemes. There are signs, however, of an increasing interest in, and understanding of, these schemes on the part of the donor community, and this interest must now be translated into concrete assistance.

The RRC has of course mobilized *domestic* resources to deal with the natural and man-made disasters that have befallen the country in the past 10 years. This is because the responsibility for taking care of the drought- and other disaster-affected citizens is regarded as resting first of all on the shoulders of the Ethiopian Government and people. Aside from budgetary allocations, the Government has allotted millions of dollars towards relief and rehabilitation projects. All relief supplies arriving in the country have always been exempt from customs duties. Moreover, the Government has put at the disposal of the RRC a variety of other resources, the cost of which, if computed, would probably run into hundreds of millions of Birr. Staff have been drawn from different ministries and from public and private organizations to help implement relief programmes. Doctors, nurses and other health personnel from the Ministry of Public Health, along with other professionals, have been assigned duties in the drought-stricken areas to assist the RRC.

Government stores and other facilities were also put at the service of the Commission. Government-owned and operated transport systems, including defence vehicles, cargo planes and amphibious craft were all made available to facilitate the relief operations that were mounted.

As for our compatriots, they continue to provide the RRC with funds, their skills and their time, and mass and public organizations have done the same. In the on-going settlement programmes, members of the Urban Dwellers' Associations and Peasants' Associations have made significant contributions in erecting shelters and individual *tukuls* (huts). In some cases, local peasants have even gone to the extent of providing the new settlers with extra clothing, household utensils, oxen and farm implements.

The Government and people of Ethiopia have given the lead to the international community in dealing with the chronic, recurring drought. This grave situation is of course persisting, due in part to the previous emphasis by donor organizations on *relief* rather than on long-term *rehabilitation* programmes. One result of this lop-sided emphasis has been the inability to cope adequately with the droughts of the 1970s, early 1980s and with the much more severe drought of 1983-84. As has been discussed in earlier chapters, relief and rehabilitation are two sides of the same coin. Relief programmes refer to those activities which aim at feeding and providing basic necessities to people made destitute by the drought. Rehabilitation, on the other hand, focuses more on getting the drought victims to be productive and self-sufficient, involving among other things provision of inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, tractors and technical advice, and laying down infrastruture for further economic and social development.

The severity of this latter drought moved the world in a way that had never been witnessed before in Ethiopia. The great publicizing effort made by the RRC finally attracted the attention of donor organizations the world over and leading personalities from the UN, including the Secretary-General, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, government representatives, party officials, senators, Congressmen, voluntary agency officers, as well as prominent individuals, renowned writers, artists, musicians, journalists, film-makers, photographers and a host of other people from all walks of life.

In addition to everything else it was doing in mounting and advancing the country's relief and rehabilitation work, the RRC had therefore also to attend to these arriving dignitaries. It had to arrange their visits, meet them at the airport, explain the details of the situation, arrange accommodation for them, lay on transport facilities so they could go into the field to see for themselves the grim realities. Furthermore, the RRC arranged meetings with high officials in the Ethiopian Government so that these dignitaries could gain deeper insights into the relief and rehabilitation programmes as well as into the overall situation in Ethiopia. These efforts to orientate the visitors comprised an extra heavy load on the RRC, but they have entailed what are best described as pleasant difficulties.

One of the purposes of this book is to demonstrate that, generous though the international community's response has been so far, it has not been anywhere near enough to meet the dimensions of Ethiopia's needs. The plight of our people is more catastrophic and their needs more urgent and profound than the enormous open-handedness of private individuals and families can possibly cope with. It is institutional responses that have to be changed, bureaucracies broken through, if the kind and volume of assistance required is to reach those most in need. Ways have to be found to transform *pledges* into *delivered assistance* without any intervening, death-laden delays. Additional amounts of grain need to be pledged, along with the associated logistical support, and either the items required for the rehabilitation schemes or the means to purchase them. This is the challenge facing the donor community, and it could certainly be met without difficulty if the will to do so was there.

Owing to the low crop production last year and the poor harvest, new shelters and feeding centres will almost certainly have to be opened in the worst areas, although every effort will be made to transport needed relief supplies to the villages where the drought-affected people live. In support of the RRC's emergency relief activities, over 40 non-governmental organizations have stepped up their operations in varying degrees. Some have involved themselves in distributing food items including grain, while others have undertaken medical treatment and nutritional work in the feeding centres and shelters. As for medical services, a total of 28 expatriate doctors, 73 nurses, 11 nutritionists and 19 support staff have been assisting the people most in need, working in close cooperation with Ethiopian counterparts. But more doctors and nurses are required, along with additional medical supplies as a result of the deteriorating situation.

The Need for the Transition from Emergency Assistance to Rehabilitation Programmes

The fight against hunger and the efforts mounted to mitigate disasters have hitherto been of a fire-fighting nature. This is borne out by the fact that 10 years after the previous severe drought, the major preoccupation still continues to be with emergency situations and efforts on a temporary and short-term basis. Obviously, relief assistance in the form of food, medicine and clothing are important components in the overall disaster rescue missions of concerned organizations, but planning for the prevention of disaster and for permanent rehabilitation schemes are as important as the immediate life-saving relief programmes, if not more so.

As has been underlined by concerned Ethiopian officials at numerous international gatherings, such a long-range view would obviate the need for endless handouts. Emphasizing this very approach to assistance, the Brandt Commission had this to say:

> Putting an end to hunger is a challenge to the world's economic system requiring complementary national and international measures. Only major efforts of investment planning and research can make enough food available for the six billion people the world will probably hold by the year 2000 . . . the reduction of poverty itself is equally essential for abolishing hunger.[2]

Taking the view that development aid is better than food aid the Brandt Commission reached the conclusion that 'food relief programmes often cost more in one year than would the five-year local investment programmes which might have made them unnecessary.'[3]

The Brandt Commission does not, however, argue that food aid is not necessary. It believes that, food being the most primary of necessities in disaster-affected regions, continued assistance in this important area is essential. It bases this proposition on the fact that disaster-affected countries need about 10 to 15 years to become self-reliant in food.[4] In the meantime the affected countries must have enough food made available to them while their self-sufficiency programmes are implemented in earnest with the provision of rehabilitation inputs.

In a specific recommendation to Ethiopia's peculiar situation, a UNDP/FAO team had this warning to make if long-term assistance is not effected.

> If a major resettlement and land use improvement programme were not implemented, within the next decade increasingly severe famines and further deterioration of living standards would follow.[5]

Jack Shepherd, an astute observer of the Ethiopian scene, had as early as 1975 offered the proposition, still incontestable, that the most effective way to keep disasters at bay is through the mechanism of disaster planning.[6] This obviously means investing in the rehabilitation of the environment and the affected population.

Referring to the mutual interests of donor and recipient countries and to the nature of the world's interdependence, Amir Jamal, the Tanzanian Minister and a member of the Brandt Commission, had this to say: '. . . the North cannot be secure if we are not secure . . . you are locked with us and we are locked with you . . .'[7] Dr. Berhane Gebray, Ethiopian Ambassador to the EEC, quoting authoritative sources, also put into concrete terms what the economic partnership of the developing world means to Europe:

> . . . 40 per cent of the (European) Community's exports valued at US$100,000 million go to the Third World, and the Third World exports products worth US$80,000 million to the Community. This demonstrates clearly that the ACP states are major suppliers of raw materials to the Community and, in turn, are a very sizeable market for the Community's products.[8]

The European Economic Community itself has come to realize that the assistance for and development of the ACP countries who find themselves in economic difficulties is not a selfless exercise.

> Third World development (is) in our interest. One such area is food; not only does Europe have a moral obligation to help increase the agricultural production of the developing countries to ensure their self-sufficiency . . . Savings in food imports can be spent on importing industrial equipment and services, and these are sectors in which Europe is competitive.[9]

The policy of development assistance for eventual self-reliance has been gaining such acceptance that there is now on the agenda a European Community plan of action to combat world hunger. The plan's major components include: measures to help developing countries in their national food strategy efforts; programmes to assist regional groups of countries coping with common problems such as drought and desertification; and measures to increase the external food security of developing countries to mitigate the consequences of current food deficits.

The latest proponent of self-interest-based assistance to the economically disadvantaged South by the industrialized North is Dr. Bruno Kreisky, former Chancellor of Austria. In a speech delivered at the 13th McDougall Memorial Lecture, Dr. Kreisky proposed a large-scale international credit scheme to assist Third World countries to develop their agriculture and rural infrastructures. He believes that such a scheme would benefit the industrial countries as well, providing them with increased work opportunities for their 35 million unemployed.[10]

On the other hand, a new trend which emphasizes the dangerous and counter-productive nature of food aid has also emerged. A leading proponent of this idea is Tony Jackson who, in his book *Against the Grain*, has tried to document the general ineffectiveness of food assistance in the rehabilitation of disaster-affected populations in many parts of the developing world.

A West German food expert, Otto Matzke, has also outlined the dangerous tendency of food aid to encourage the postponement of long overdue domestic measures to develop self-reliance and the market displacement of farmers that takes place in the countries receiving food aid.[11] Otto Matzke believes that outside aid can be more than a temporary catalytic agent in developing countries efforts to achieve food production for themselves and that only those countries which are making serious efforts to help themselves can in fact benefit from foreign aid.[12]

But even when misgivings are expressed about food aid's effect on long-term development by people such as Tony Jackson, there is no suggestion that food aid should not be given where it is genuinely needed, for instance, to refugees in emergencies where food itself is in short supply, and in the institutional feeding of the old, the sick and the welfare cases.[13]

In view of the preceding arguments, it is clear that in the prevailing situation in Ethiopia there can be no provision of one kind of assistance to the exclusion of the other. Short-term relief and long-term rehabilitation programmes are both needed. The country's poverty and weak economic structure suggest that a double-pronged policy of funnelling emergency relief assistance and long-term rehabilitation inputs should be undertaken simultaneously. It is only in this manner that the pressing daily necessities and ultimate self-sufficiency goals can be achieved to the satisfaction of all concerned. As an Amharic proverb says እለጉብሶ፡ ቢያርሱ፡ ባረም፡ ይወለሱ 'Inadequately tilled land produces more weeds'). Likewise, inadequately assisted victims continue to rely on donors' charity year in and year out.

Proper Utilization of Assistance

Though the work of the RRC and its operational partners, the Volags, has built up a high reputation, allegations have been made in some circles about Ethiopia's misuse or diversion of international assistance destined for the drought-affected populations in the country.

The clean record of the RRC in the administration of funds it has received from the international community cannot, however, be seriously challenged. In this respect the world media, major donor organizations and international personalities have all given their testimonials. A well-known monthly magazine, *New African*, had this to say:

> . . . the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) enjoys the confidence of the world aid agencies and has proved itself a capable administrator of resources. . . . Most of the assistance is reaching the right people and the government is trying its best.[14]

This view was confirmed most emphatically by Mr. Tony Baldry, the Conservative MP for Banbury in England in a letter to the *Sunday Times* in December 1984. Referrring to allegations that the Ethiopian Government has been diverting relief aid to purposes other than those intended by the donors, Mr. Baldry wrote:

> This is not the first time that such allegations have been made, and on each and every occasion when they have been investigated the allegations have been found to be without substance. In July 1981, and again in June 1983, European Parliament delegations visited Ethiopia and reported that the country was making responsible and effective use of the food and other aid provided by the European Community and that there was no evidence to suggest that aid was going astray. This was also confirmed by a later report of the Commission of the European Community.[15]

For its part, *The Washington Post*, quoting international organizations, made this report:

> Food aid from the European Community to Ethiopia will continue despite charges that some of the aid (was being diverted) . . . The UN FAO investigated the Community's food-for-work programme twice last year where there were similar allegations that the population was not receiving any aid from international organizations. It found that the programme was working satisfactorily and that the food aid was getting to the peasant population.[16]

During a field visit to one of Ethiopia's areas where a highland reclamation project had been going on in 1982, the World Food Programme Executive Director, James Ingram, himself said: 'This is a good job. I have never seen anything like this before.'

The administration of resources donated to the RRC has thus been scrupulously utilized for the amelioration of the unhappy lot of the victims of disasters. This was underlined by the RRC Commissioner

Dawit Wolde Giorgis, who in an address to a donors' meeting said: 'Our sincere efforts have been deliberately misinterpreted. We have been subjected to rigorous and unfair questions, allegations and accusations . . . The RRC unlike many other similar organizations elsewhere in the world, has a neat record.'[17]

It is thus clear that one of the most unfortunate aspects of assistance is the politicization of humanitarian efforts. Food is increasingly being used as a political instrument and this unjust and morally indefensible policy should be changed. Until we adopt a compassionate and cooperative attitude towards fellow human beings in need, the world will continue to witness human misery on a massive scale.

The British voluntary agency, Oxfam, which has had a great deal of experience in the field in Ethiopia and which, since the mid-1970s, has worked closely with the RRC, has also refuted the accusations about misappropriated food aid in Ethiopia. One of its officials, Mr. Marcus Thompson, spelled out Oxfam's view in December 1984 in the following words: 'We sent a senior overseas accountant from here to audit the distribution system and procedures of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission and he found them conscientiously implemented and was very satisfied.'[18]

It is a well-known fact that secessionists and their supporters abroad have been doing all they can to discredit the efforts of the people and Government of Ethiopia by spreading rumours and using the foreign media to pump out misinformation. However, the realities of the situation and the personal witness and testimony of reputable international figures and organizations reveal these accusations to be exactly what they are – crude propaganda. Ethiopia, along with the international community, has every intention of continuing to lead the destitute residents of the drought-affected areas out of their suffering and into a healthy, productive future.

It is self-evident that relief aid which is effective is relief aid that is reaching the people who need it most. Having declared the drought and its effects to be the country's top-most priority, the Government has been using all vehicles at its command – civilian as well as military – to move food, tents and medical supplies to where they are urgently required. The total national transport fleet is about 6,630 trucks. Leaving aside those trucks that have less than a five ton payload and those that are out of order, the number of roadworthy trucks is 2,782. Of this entire national resource, 950 short and long-haul trucks – one-third of the total national transport fleet – have been allocated on a regular basis for relief operations. As in the past, the Ministry of Defence is still cooperating with the RRC. In March 1985, for instance, it made 150 trucks temporarily available to carry cargo between the port of Assab and the central warehouse at Nazareth. The following month it allocated another 250 trucks. In such a situation it is, of course, pure malice for anyone to claim that relief items are being directed to the Army simply because relief items are seen in military vehicles. Indeed, the military forces and the police, in common with the general public, have on several occasions donated a share of their rations to the drought victims as well as a proportion of their income towards the national relief and rehabilitation effort.

Aid Distribution

The RRC gets much of its food aid and other relief items through the two Ethiopian ports of Assab and Massawa as well as through Djibouti. Of these ports, the RRC usually prefers vessels carrying food aid to call at Assab because of its convenient location and easy access to the hinterland. However, since the bulk of Ethiopian import/export traffic also uses this same port, the Commission has, time and again, been forced to authorize diversion of vessels – at high costs to shippers – to the less congested port of Massawa and sometimes to Djibouti.

Such diversion of vessels has brought with it logistical complications which have in turn led to additional transportation costs. The distance that has to be covered from the ports of entry to the main RRC stores and thence to regional stores, as well as to stores at distribution centres, is very great indeed. The RRC has therefore been forced to use its limited number of trucks and to hire others in the effort to reach the destitute in the quickest time possible. Needless to say, the cost of this exercise has been extremely high. Moreover, the RRC has frequently found itself having to meet the costs of fumigating food aid at the port; this is because there has hitherto not been enough storage space, with the result that quantities of the food have been spoiled by the scorching sun. The Italian government is in the process of building at Assab a 50,000-metric-ton capacity warehouse which, when completed, will go a long way to solving this particular problem. The RRC will still, however, have to pay the re-bagging costs of cargoes previously packed in brittle and fragile containers.

Another stumbling block in the distribution of food aid and other relief items has been the shortage of storage facilities beyond the precincts of the port. Food and other perishable items such as medicaments have from time to time been spoilt by having to be left exposed to the elements. Furthermore, what storage facilities there have been have so far not tallied with the number of distribution centres. The RRC has dealt with this difficulty by setting up temporary stores, using for the purpose plastic or tarpaulin sheeting. Being temporary, these stores have unavoidably been susceptible to damage.

To overcome this problem once and for all, the RRC decided to construct storehouses in the heart of the disaster-hit areas. There is now at Nazareth, to the south-east of Addis Ababa, a huge warehouse with a capacity of 100,000 metric tons; it has cost Birr 13 million to build and is expected to be the main facility from which all relief destined for the drought-affected regions will be distributed. Plans have been finalized to build storage facilities in eight more regions with an estimated total capacity of 180,000 metric tons, and work is due to start soon.

Laudable though this effort is, it is nowhere near enough. Much more still has to be done. This will only be achieved, however, if more relevant assistance from the international community is channelled into this venture.

As the rugged nature of the landscape is often unsuitable for surface transportation, the Commission has been compelled to use aircraft to reach remote places in the grip of the drought. This expensive option of airlifting supplies to such areas has inevitably entailed sacrifices.

Over the years, air distribution has taken two principal forms. In the first place, as for example at the height of the 1972-74 drought and at the height of the 1983-84 drought as well as at other times of serious emergency operations, small supplies are air-dropped. Secondly, limited relief is airfreighted to emergency areas. The cost of both kinds of commodity-transporting tends to be extremely high and as such it has continually forced the diversion of scarce relief resources from other programmes.

An additional problem is that there are simply not enough aircraft available. The Commission has operated in the past decade with two outdated DC-3 147 aircraft, which it owns, and more recently with a Twin Otter plane which was temporarily provided by World Vision International (Ethiopia). Lack of spare parts and the high price of fuel which the DC-3s consume have delayed many a scheduled operation.

During 1984/85 however, up to 62 additional aircraft from governments and international organizations were temporarily assigned to the relief operation.

Although the cost of air-lifting and air-dropping and trucking has been considerable, victims in remote and inaccessible areas have been able to receive at least some relief assistance. A quintal of relief grain at times cost three to four times its value. But the saving of human lives has made it necessary to meet these astronomical costs.

Those who have seen Ethiopia's gigantic mountain ranges and the huge ravines and canyons that criss-cross the central highland plateau understand what a crucial impact the country's topography has had on the distribution of aid. The very small number of roads, especially in the drought-prone regions, has made it immensely difficult to reach the victims of natural disaster. This implies that any assistance mobilized for road-building projects will not only facilitate the distribution of urgent aid, but will also have a direct impact on the country's rehabilitation programmes. The roads will allow the flow of development inputs to the peasants in the hinterland and the outward flow of their agricultural produce to the markets. In this way the roads will not only be bringing relief to those in need, they will also, in the long run, help to make the peasants self-sufficient and bring to an end their dependence on relief aid.

Despite all the difficulties, however, of insufficient relief assistance being provided, lack of sufficient logistical support, and the problems of transportation to remote areas, the RRC attempts to reach all those in need of relief, wherever in the country they may be, and however difficult it is to reach them. As a purely humanitarian organization, the RRC uses a sole criterion for the receipt of relief assistance, and that criterion is one of need.

The RRC has had to contend with one other adverse factor, namely the activities of bandits and rebels in inaccessible terrain and along the border in some parts of the north. These rebels sometimes affect the movement of relief supplies and other items by sniping at RRC personnel and looting the cargoes destined for the destitute drought victims. At times these bandits, in violent despair, even set fire to the trucks carrying the life-saving commodities. Despite this harassment, the RRC has never been swayed from its determination to reach those in need of the succour that it brings. The main obstacles to be overcome remain, however, the inhospitable terrain, the lack of roads and the shortage of suitable vehicles.

Background to the Need for Assistance to Ethiopia

Ethiopia happened to be one of the first African countries to be affected by the drought which started in 1968 and mainly affected the countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region. To date, the drought has spread to the countries of eastern and southern Africa, engulfing no fewer than 34 African states and affecting some 150 million people.[19]

The drought which led to the 1972-74 famine in Ethiopia claimed the lives of about 200,000 people, as mentioned earlier on. But drought is destructive not only of life. Its effects linger. It corrupts also the stability of communities, scattering the people in search of food; it slows down and puts economic production under heavy strain. And with merciless power, it attacks the future by pulverizing the soil and laying waste fields that once were fertile. In a country where virtually the entire rural population makes its living on the land through rainfed agriculture, a shortage of rain has a direct effect on the amount of food available. And the longer the rains fail, the more widespread food shortages become. People begin to be malnourished. The continuation of this state of affairs diminishes their resistance to diseases. Malnourishment gives way to undernourishment, and then to the horrors of famine and deaths on a massive scale. Drought also sharply depletes livestock, thus undoing one of the bases on which the rural economy rests, resulting in even greater poverty and human suffering.

Drought and desertification obviously lead to a drastic reduction in the area of arable land. This means that the available labour force has less and less land to cultivate. As a result of this rural unemployment, there is an exodus from the land to the urban centres, but the towns can provide very few jobs, leaving the people to live in profound insecurity. The agro-industrial sectors are also seriously affected since they suffer from shortages of raw materials which used traditionally to come from the drought-affected regions.

The resources of the health and welfare services are rapidly exhausted and they become unable to cope with the increasing demands of the affected areas. Scarce national resources are diverted to famine relief operations, thus perpetuating the vicious circle of low income, poverty, lack of capital for investment, low productivity, etc. Ethiopia has been suffering precisely from these consequences of drought.

The unfavourable climatic situations that have been recurring over the last decade have each time been followed by serious food shortages. Such shortages occurred in Ethiopia in 1975-76, 1978-79, 1979-80 and in 1982-83. This critical situation has by no means eased and is still wracking the country in 1985.

The food shortages and other shortfalls created by natural disasters (mainly drought) were aggravated by the plight of 2.4 million displaced people following the Somalian war of aggression of 1977-78.

The Government of Socialist Ethiopia, which inherited a weak infrastructure from the feudal order, was ill-equipped to withstand the effects of natural and man-made calamities that had befallen several millions of its citizens. The fact that the country is one of the least developed in the world, with the lowest external per capita assistance, degraded soil, high deforestation rates and difficult terrain, all add up to a perfect prescription for enormous socio-economic problems.

The country's prevailing economic weakness has rendered it incapable of dealing adequately with the overwhelming destructive might of nature. Everything that it could possibly do, Ethiopia has done, but what remains to be done is truly awesome. This situation gives rise, we believe, to a humanitarian and moral obligation on the part of the international community to rescue the millions of Ethiopians who are victims of these natural and man-made calamities, and to demonstrate its cooperation with the Government in a way that boosts its effectiveness in overcoming the crisis.

An EEC publication describes such a predicament in the following way: 'Widespread famine prevents development. Hunger and disease destroy the capacity to work; without work, there is no purchasing power, without purchasing power there is no investment and hence no agricultural development. This vicious circle must be broken.'[20] The need for external assistance in the case of Ethiopia has also been put in a universal perspective: 'Major human disasters are international problems, and they require international action.'[21] Yet in Ethiopia the requirements have far outstripped the amount mustered from domestic sources. It is against this background that Ethiopia's call for international assistance should be viewed.

General Assessment of International Assistance and Involvement

The appeals made by Ethiopia for humanitarian assistance to the victims of natural and man-made disasters have by and large generated a noteworthy response. International bodies, foreign governments, NGO's, charitable organizations and individuals have all stirred themselves to help the famine-stricken and displaced population to overcome their difficulties.

While international assistance has helped enormously in alleviating the immediate needs of millions of victims of disaster, the RRC emphasizes that this assistance has been nowhere near the volume required. It has also been noted that other countries which have faced problems far less severe than Ethiopia's have received much greater amounts of relief aid. The experience of the past decade suggests that assistance received by Ethiopia has usually been less than one-third of that requested. At this juncture it would be appropriate to recall that Ethiopia is the world's lowest per capita recipient of official development assistance.

The Involvement of the UN and its Agencies

Since 1974 both the UN General Assembly and the ECOSOC have appealed each year to governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations to continue and to increase their assistance to the Government of Ethiopia in its effort to give relief and rehabilitation assistance and to support its endeavours to help the drought-stricken areas of the country.

For example, the UN General Assembly in its resolution 34/54 of 11 December 1979 requested UNDRO, UNDP, WFP, UNICEF and other UN organizations and specialized agencies to contribute and intensify their assistance to Ethiopia in its relief and rehabilitation efforts in their particular areas of competence. The resolution also appealed to governments and NGOs to do the same.

The UN inter-agency mission report of 1980 E/1980/104 clearly put the critical and disturbing facts about the plight of the displaced persons and the Government's tremendous burden of assisting nearly 5 million people affected by both natural calamities and man-made disasters. The mission's report further pointed out that lasting solutions to the problems faced by Ethiopia would lie in the promotion of development programmes in areas of agricultural potential, rather than in the provision of relief year by year. The Economic and Social Council, in its first regular session in 1980, considered the problem of displaced persons in Ethiopia. In its resolution E/1980/8, the Council

Top: Relief supplies being loaded for transport to remote drought-affected areas.

POLISH RELIEF
HELICOPTER SQUADRON in

Helicopters and aircraft from friendly countries played a vital part in the massive relief operation in Ethiopia.

recognized the need for continued financial and material support to grapple with the problem, and appealed to the international community to assist the Ethiopian Government in the tremendous work it was doing. And indeed the agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, WFP, UNHCR and UNDRO have done much both in relief and rehabilitation projects.

Bilateral Assistance

Of the overall acquisitions by Ethiopia of foreign assistance to the victims of disasters, a significant proportion came from bilateral donors which also channelled substantial amounts through international organizations and voluntary agencies. The assistance consisted of grain, high-protein food, other food-related items as well as transportation, equipment, machinery and cash for both relief and rehabilitation activities.

Assistance from friendly governments included rural road construction projects, afforestation and land-reclamation schemes, water facilities and the setting up of health stations and garages in and around the disaster-affected regions. Some 1,007,104 metric tons of grain, 75,803 metric tons of high-protein food and 13,792 metric tons of edible oil was provided by 44 countries up to 1983.

Ethiopia has received over 2,100,000 metric tons of food items during the past decade (See Appendix 2).

Brief Appraisal of the Activities of Voluntary Organizations

Voluntary organizations also make a substantial contribution to relief and rehabilitation activities. In the Ethiopian case, they have played, and are still playing a major role in assisting the victims of natural and man-made disasters. The 15 donor NGOs which were able to provide accurate financial information relating to the previous decade (for the purposes of this book) have given Birr 289 million worth of assistance including cash for rehabilitation work in Ethiopia. By now, over 40 voluntary agencies (Volags) are involved in different self-sufficiency and rehabilitation projects in 11 administrative regions of the country.

The benevolent actions of Volags are invariably motivated by humanitarian concern and the number of them operating in Ethiopia is well over 40. This gives an idea of how deeply involved they are in helping our disaster victims. It is also an indication of the Ethiopian Government's awareness of the significance of the NGO activities and the importance it attaches to their operations. Had it not been for the extensive involvement of the NGOs, the RRC would have found it very difficult to mitigate the problems of the affected population in the country with the limited resources at its disposal.

The role played by voluntary agencies is commendable by any standards. These organizations came to the aid of those in need, either individually or by combining their resources. Ethiopia has benefited considerably from their direct assistance or that channelled through the agency of their offices. A notable aspect of voluntary agency action is the speed with which it gets assistance to the needy and the efficiency of its administration. Voluntary agencies act in a spirit of dedication, are flexible in their performance and not limited by mandate and appropriations.

Their assistance has enabled the RRC to help a large number of victims over the past decade. The assistance has ranged from foodstuffs, medicaments and clothes in the area of relief, to rehabilitation and settlement inputs such as agricultural implements, cattle, water pipes for irrigation, etc. The cash and material assistance furnished by Volags has expedited financing and support of such important activities as the construction of stores, building of roads, setting up of schools and clinics as well as providing water supply facilities.

However, when one takes stock of the activities in the major areas of RRC – voluntary agency joint venture operations, one cannot help but notice the unbalanced nature of the assistance activities. With only very few exceptions, voluntary agencies restrict their essential services to relief activities, no doubt for good reasons of their own. However, because of this preoccupation with the immediate needs of disaster victims, they tend, in many instances, to refrain from extending their assistance to the support of rehabilitation and settlement programmes.[22]

Relief and rehabilitation programmes are two sides of the same coin. Only parallel action in both aspects makes for the successful alleviation and prevention of disasters. Relief assistance operations cannot attain their objectives unless they are bolstered by rehabilitation and resettlement activities which are a sure way of controlling the recurrence of situations that require the mounting of rescue again and again.

It follows, therefore, that wherever relief activities are in operation, rehabilitation should consolidate them so as to obviate the need for continuous assistance in the future. The RRC and several voluntary organizations have been jointly undertaking such programmes in the past, e.g. CRDA, World Vision International (Ethiopia), Lutheran World Federation, Norwegian Save the Children Fund, the Catholic Secretariat, and several others. However, it is imperative that a great many more such as these, focused upon long-term solutions, be mounted and sustained in the future.

Receipt of Assistance: Input-Output Model and Information Flow

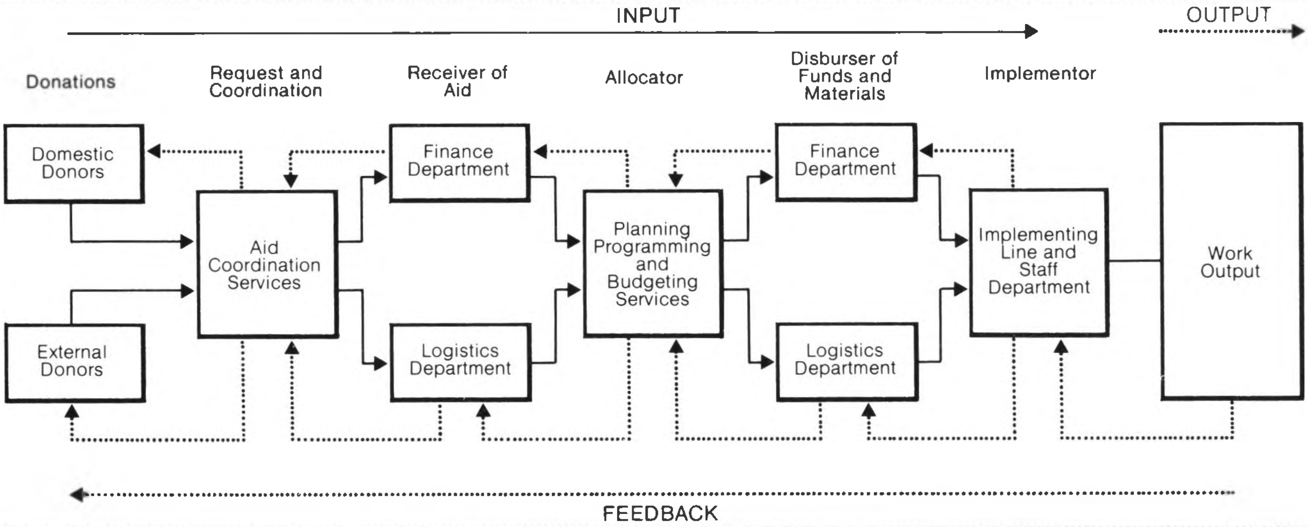
The need to react quickly to emergencies has necessitated periods of what might be termed 'crisis management' during the first 10 years of activities. This notwithstanding the Commission has learnt a great deal and has done much to improve its systems of operation. For example, a number of forms have been drawn up which have simplified much routine work. Seminars have been held designed to acquaint RRC employees with mechanisms of relief food distribution. At the same time, the unit assigned the task of soliciting for funds and assistance in kind has also been restructured and now focuses its attention on the centralization of receipt of assistance and the provision of feedback reports. Efforts along these lines continue and the Commission is certain that it will very soon come to a point where it is fully capable of providing the necessary utilization reports for all assistance it has been furnished with.

There have been occasions when the RRC has had difficulties in meeting donated item utilization schedules. There have been three main reasons for this. First, there have been shortcomings in the proper and centralized registration of donations and in the upkeep of documents. Secondly, the RRC has, more often than not, been immersed in emergency work which has interrupted the process of putting records in order. Thirdly, assistance has, in the past, been solicited by several different departments which in turn have failed to report fully enough on funds received or on their utilization.

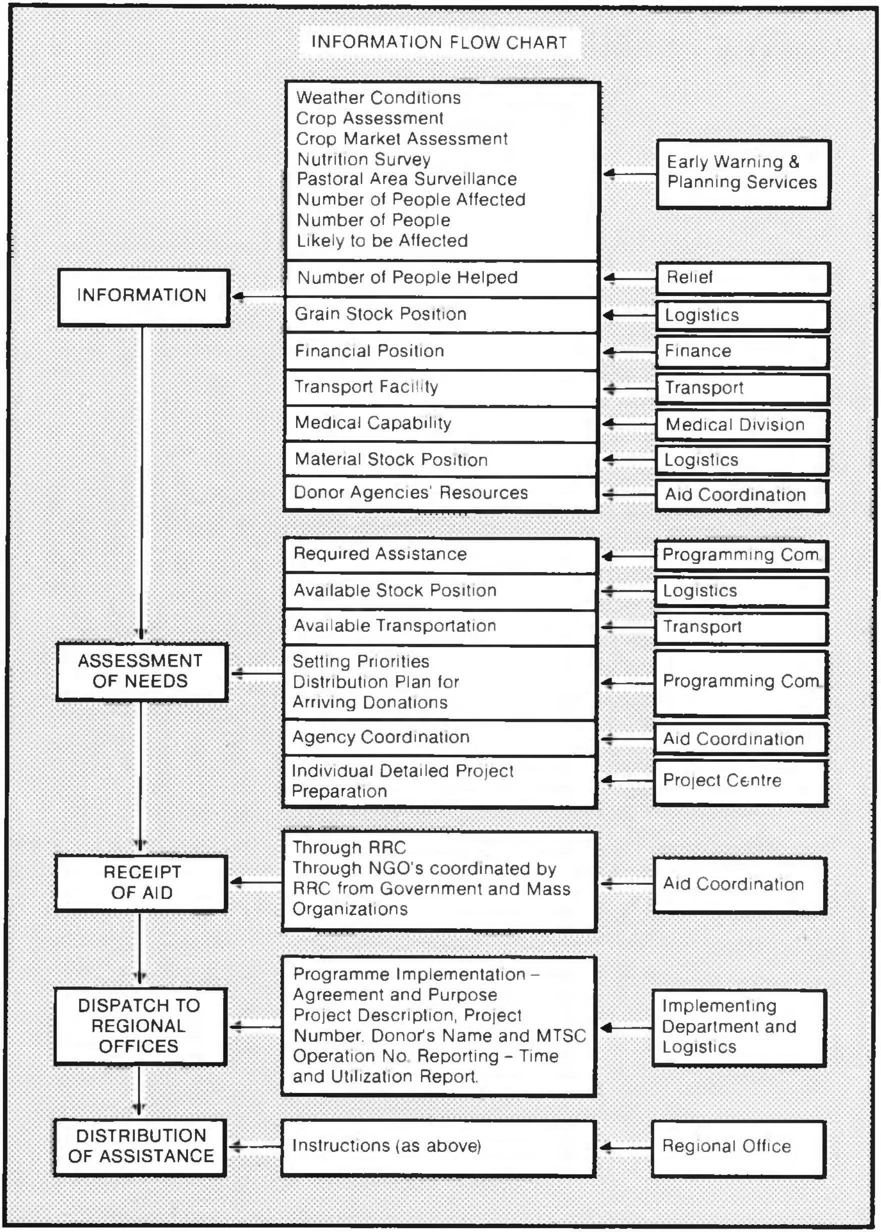
The RRC, therefore, recently devised an Input-Output Model (see page 223) in the belief that this may help to streamline its operations. The model presupposes the existence of centralization and coordination of all activities. Assistance under the model is solicited and all arrangements for its transfer to Ethiopia, as well as registration formalities, are handled solely by the appropriate professional department – Aid Coordination and International Relations Services, which

INPUT-OUTPUT MODEL

The following constitutes the input-output model operationalized by the RRC. Assistance received by the organization flows in the manner shown in the model below and the feedback reports are treated at each stage and ultimately complete the model.


INPUT
OUTPUT
Donations
Request and Coordination
Receiver of Aid
Allocator
Disburser of Funds and Materials
Implementor
Domestic Donors
External Donors
Aid Coordination Services
Finance Department
Logistics Department
Planning Programming and Budgeting Services
Finance Department
Logistics Department
Implementing Line and Staff Department
Work Output
FEEDBACK

Source: Input-Output Model for Donations and Their Utilization, Teshome Tadesse. Planning, Programming and Budgeting Services, (Amharic), RRC, 1979, p.7



INFORMATION FLOW CHART

INFORMATION
Weather Conditions
Crop Assessment
Crop Market Assessment
Nutrition Survey
Pastoral Area Surveillance
Number of People Affected
Number of People
Likely to be Affected
Early Warning & Planning Services
Number of People Helped
Relief
Grain Stock Position
Logistics
Financial Position
Finance
Transport Facility
Transport
Medical Capability
Medical Division
Material Stock Position
Logistics
Donor Agencies' Resources
Aid Coordination
ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS
Required Assistance
Programming Com
Available Stock Position
Logistics
Available Transportation
Transport
Setting Priorities
Distribution Plan for
Arriving Donations
Programming Com
Agency Coordination
Aid Coordination
Individual Detailed Project Preparation
Project Centre
RECEIPT OF AID
Through RRC
Through NGO's coordinated by RRC from Government and Mass Organizations
Aid Coordination
DISPATCH TO REGIONAL OFFICES
Programme Implementation –
Agreement and Purpose
Project Description, Project Number. Donor's Name and MTSC Operation No. Reporting – Time and Utilization Report.
Implementing Department and Logistics
DISTRIBUTION OF ASSISTANCE
Instructions (as above)
Regional Office

compiles all departments' requirements and presents these to donor agencies.

The Planning Services Department, under the model, allocates the funds and materials obtained to the various activities of the RRC in line with the organization's priorities. In accordance with agreed allocations, the Departments of Finance, Logistics and Transport then disburse or despatch the funds and materials to the line departments which actually utilize the donated items for RRC operations.

Ultimately, the results obtained in the form of output are analysed by the departments concerned, and the necessary feedback reports are returned as illustrated in the model.

The RRC has been doing all in its power to put the model fully into practice. More recently, a committee charged with the study of information flow within the Commission was established and has devised an Information Flow model which supplements the Input-Output model. The Information Flow model (see page 224) details how data is gathered and assessed at various levels; how assistance received is distributed; and, ultimately, how feedback reports are relayed.

The model starts with the supply of basic situational information by the Early Warning and Planning Services as well as the Relief Department. The data made available by the two departments is the principal basis for the assessment of the needs that surface at particular periods of time of any year. The inputs of seven other departments and services at the Headquarters level are essential components of the information supplied before the actual needs are assessed and soliciting for assistance can begin.

Assistance is furnished by donors and received by the Commission through the Aid Coordination and International Relations Services. The assistance is then despatched through the agency of the implementing departments and Logistics to the regional offices whence distribution is effected. Detailed reports of distribution are relayed by the branch offices of the RRC for the preparation of assistance utilization reports to donors.

The RRC can therefore be seen to be in the process of improving its methods of work with a view to bringing about greater organizational efficiency. This effort has already borne fruit and, as the dynamism of an organization lies in its ability to respond, change and develop in line with changing circumstances, the RRC will continue to initiate and implement increasingly streamlined systems capable of tackling new and recurring problems.

CONCLUSION

THE STRUGGLE FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY

The cyclical drought in Ethiopia and its grim effects finally entered the consciousness of the whole world late in 1984 thanks to the publicizing work of television and newspaper journalists and donor organizations. The compassion of people in all walks of life has been aroused and the generosity of their response has been a truly ennobling experience. Individual members of the public and ordinary families in particular have transcended all barriers to human solidarity in their efforts to get as much aid as possible to the drought-stricken areas of the country. People have not been prevented by ideological considerations from showing their concern in the most practical ways possible – by sending money, medicines, clothing and other commodities in a crash programme to support the RRC's life-saving operations. These people have demonstrated that, in the end, all that matters is mankind's dignity: nationality, religious creed or ethnic origin should not be allowed to conceal the essential oneness of the human family or to let its spirit be degraded by grinding poverty.

Many of these people, in countries through the world, have been dismayed and bewildered by their governments' slowness in responding to the crisis in Ethiopia. They have wondered why such vitally important programmes of support have had to be organized by private individuals with nothing like the resources of state agencies. They have written to newspapers in their home towns, spoken on radio and appeared on television to ask why there has been such a lack of urgency in their governments' attitude. The people of Ethiopia, too, have not failed to perceive the distinction between the open-hearted generosity of the private sector overseas and the tight-fisted tardiness of the central governments.

The fact of the matter is that the solution to Ethiopia's problems requires financial and technical resources way beyond the means of private individuals. The reason for this is that the problem will never be solved by short-term relief operations: bringing food and medication to those in hunger is by definition an *emergency* action – it does not even begin to address the underlying *causes* of the problem. Addressing those causes requires, however, a commitment to *long-term development assistance* whose cost is such that only governments can mobilize the necessary funds. It is very sad to realize the extent to which humanitarian aid has been politicized by certain governments; their categorical refusal to become involved in long-term development projects is condemning many Ethiopians to perennial destitution.

The governments concerned have expressed the view that there is a difference between humanitarian aid and aid that is deployed to solve structural problems and thereby raise our people out of poverty and bring an end to their dependence on foreign assistance. But what, in all logic, can be more humanitarian that to enable people to become self-sufficient in food? What is more humanitarian than to create the conditions in which Ethiopia's peasants become more productive farmers and in the process rebuild their pride and self-respect? What can be more humanitarian than to make it possible to rediscover their resourcefulness and thereby boost the nation's agriculture so that a surplus can help to pay for the goods needed for the country's industrialization? The answer is, of course, quite clear. Since aid which makes people self-sufficient and independent is the most humanitarian of all, the basis on which governments have refused to give such aid is purely political. That is to say, Ethiopia is being denied such long-term assistance for no other reason than that Ethiopia has chosen the socialist path to its national development.

There is no pleasure to be derived from pointing out that, despite the rigours of the drought, Ethiopia's poverty has much to do with this negative attitude of Western governments. The economic pressures that bear down on our export earnings and thus reduce the agricultural inputs we can buy abroad; the deteriorating terms of trade that decrease the purchasing power of our commodities; the protectionism that makes it difficult to get our produce on to the markets; and the interest payments on our foreign debt that leave us less foreign exchange with which to modernize our agriculture – these are destructive forces beyond our control but which the international community certainly could alter in our interests if it so desired. In this sense, Ethiopia's predicament is in part the direct result of the unfair nature of relations between the industrialized world and the developing countries.

Bad weather does not cause particularly serious damage in a wealthy environment. A rich nation would have been able to deal far more effectively with the effects of recurrent drought. It would have had stocks of food to tide its people over bad harvests. It would have had a road network throughout the countryside that made distribution of relief straightforward and simple. Its telecommunications would have gathered relevant data from its early warning system in all parts of the country, the better to respond to local exigencies. And its people, the victims of the drought, would have been far more educated, technically more competent and skilled, than the inhabitants of poverty-stricken rural villages with barely any formal learning; in short, the people of a rich nation would have been much easier to mobilize into relief and rehabilitation projects.

This hypothetical scenario contains in part the answer to our problem. It is a formulation, in reverse, of our own situation. Good sense and reason therefore urge us to continue taking those measures that will make us more sufficiently developed to withstand the rigours and the shortages ushered in by drought. In terms of policy, this implies that we should stick to our three approaches to mend the situation: (a) relief operations that bring food, water, medicines, clothing, tents and other basic necessities in haste to save as many lives as possible and give people the will to live; (b) provision of self-sufficiency packages which enable people to restore their means of livelihood, mainly in their own localities, and which include items such as seeds, handtools and draught-oxen; and (c) rehabilitation schemes which entail a long-term development perspective, including resettlement programmes, which take people to more fertile and more spacious areas of the country where they can lead productive lives and create a surplus with which to develop our agriculture and industry. Rehabilitation also encompasses all work done to restore the productivity of our depleted soils, particularly in the north of the country – what we refer to as *environmental* rehabilitation.

This kind of long-term approach to the underlying causes of famine reflects, as it happens, an understanding of the features of national life that Ethiopia shares with many other underdeveloped countries, particularly in Africa. A poor communications infrastructure is not the only characteristic Ethiopia has in common with the other Sahelian states. The isolation of rural villages and towns from one another and from the capital city; the extremely low ratio of telephones to population; the great majority of families employed on the land, very many of them in the obscurity of subsistence farming outside the money economy; the daily struggle involving miles of walking by the women to get supplies of water that are contaminated with impurities; the virtual absence of food reserves at strategic points within the country; the widespread incidence of chronic undernutrition in mothers which perpetuates the cycle of low birth weight, perinatal infection and poor growth in childhood; the grossly inadequate health care facilities, with most of the available medical resources concentrated in the main cities; the generally low levels of literacy (although Ethiopia has made tremendous headway with its literacy campaign) – these are the components of a fragile national life which Ethiopia shares with many other developing countries and which make it so vulnerable to natural disasters. There is hardly any room for manoeuvre when the rains fail. No supplies of crops as a standby. No clinics in the vicinity where medicines may be bought for the unwell children. And no money to buy the drugs with even if they were available.

This is the national profile that is relevant when nature strikes its blows. The country suffers in proportion to how ready it is to resist. It is therefore a question of long-term preparation, of organizations and institutions established to raise the level of the people's life. What drought does, according to Ethiopia's experience, is in a way to test a country's institutional resilience and expose its weaknesses. This is the sense in which human suffering is man-made. The droughts or floods may come, the tornadoes blow, the earthquakes tear the land apart – but the failure to be ready and able to cope with these destructive forces is in the final analysis a human failure. It is not that the furies of nature are selective, hitting only poor countries; they hit *all* countries, irrespective of size of Gross National Product. But some countries are much better equipped than others, financially, technically, organizationally, to overcome the effects with a minimum of casualties and damage.

This analysis shows just how inadequate emergency relief operations are as far as the susceptibility of societies to disaster is concerned. The UN disaster expert Barbara J. Brown indicates in a totally independent way the validity and effectiveness of what the Ethiopian Government has been seeking to accomplish with its rehabilitation programmes:

> Natural disasters are not isolated incidents, but development problems requiring planned, coordinated and long-term responses. While disaster relief is necessary, relief should not remain the only UN strategy for combatting disaster. Greater attention should be paid to disaster preparedness and disaster prevention programmes.[1]

Drought, it has long been clear, is destructive not only of human and animal life in the short run. Its effects persist. It corrupts also the stability of communities, scattering the people in search of food. It slows down and puts the economy under heavy strain. And with merciless power, it attacks the future by pulverizing the soil and laying waste fields that once were fertile. It is against this background that Ethiopia's call for long-term development assistance should be viewed.

The call is being made because, despite all the work that has been done since the RRC was estabished in 1974, the dominant reality is that the country is still in the grip of a devastating drought. There have scarcely been any real rains in the drought-prone areas since the 1972-74 catastrophe and, especially in the northern regions, no basis on which to expect any significant change in the foreseeable future. In this respect, Ethiopia's recent history has become similar to, if not an extension of, the fate of other African countries being undermined by desertification. Communities and entire cultures have been eroded and destroyed across the breadth of Africa; there has been a dramatic and painful rupture with the patterns of the past. Under the pressure of cruelly persistent bad weather, the very nature of some societies has been transformed out of all recognition. Once-proud pastoralists, surrounded by the bleached skeletons of their livestock, have been driven into penury, at the mercy of people whom they would previously not have deigned to beseech for help. Farmers whose forbears had worked the land since antiquity find that they have actually destroyed the foundation of their well-being by overworking the soil until all its regenerative powers have been exhausted.

In view of the epic dimensions of Ethiopia's problems, it is not surprising that the RRC has had its share of stress and frustration. It can, nevertheless, be said to have managed to overcome a number of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. The very nature of the situation that brought it into being, the very purpose which it was designed to serve, make the RRC a unique organization. It has in the past decade been on what can only be described as an Homeric odyssey. Born and nurtured in the midst of the cataclysmic drought of 1972-74, it has survived and against all the odds has managed not only to save countless lives but also to put the response to nature's devastation into a scientific framework. As this book has sought to indicate, the RRC has found the way to a better future. What it now needs is a commitment on the part of governments to help it implement its long-term rehabilitation programmes.

From its very inception, the RRC's operations have been hindered by hostile factors, notably Somalia's war of aggression and the disruptive activities of secessionists in the north and anti-revolutionary elements in other regions of the country. Its struggle against famine and pestilence has thus been waged within a context wider than might at first appear to the inexperienced eye. An additional dimension to the RRC's activities has been the massive influx of refugees and other displaced persons whom it has had to feed, care for and accommodate.

In view of this huge, complicated and continually shifting drama of sickness, sorrow and destitution, against which it has had meagre resources to deploy, the achievements of the RRC must surely be seen as admirable.

There is much historical evidence, as indicated in Chapter 2 of this book, that the Ethiopian peasantry has suffered from cyclical famines and pestilence since the earliest times. There is, however, no record whatsoever of any compassion for the people's suffering, let alone a plan to reduce their vulnerability. The RRC was the first organization in Ethiopian history to approach the peasants' difficulties in a systematic manner, the first to carry out organized emergency operations, the first to set up an early warning system for impending natural disasters, and the first to launch rehabilitation projects and infrastructural activities.

Relief Operations Since 1974

Relief operations are not merely a matter of delivering grain to the starving, as we have shown in the earlier chapters of this book. They also involve arranging transport, money, manpower, logistical and other support services. The famines which Ethiopia has endured over the past decade have all required huge financial, human and material resources to alleviate the suffering of the affected people. Meeting these needs has called for dedication and commitment on the part of the Commission's staff as well as for immediate assistance both from the domestic and the international community.

In the face of the horrors of hunger and with very limited resources, the RRC had to act swiftly to forestall the incredible death rate in the famine areas. The Grain Deficit Study Committee (GDSC) had earlier tried to reach the famine-stricken regions by drawing on personnel from various ministries. This tradition of using the services of personnel borrowed on an ad hoc basis mainly from the Ministries of

Interior, Community Development, Defence and Education was adopted by the RRC in its early days. The reason for this is that when it was established in 1974 in the midst of political turbulence and a devastating famine the RRC had a staff of only six Ethiopians and a few foreign volunteers to carry out truly herculean tasks. It was authorized to draw personnel from various ministries and organizations and did so; individuals with skills and compassion were also recruited.

While the new team was not reluctant to get involved in the campaign against hunger, its members were professionally heterogeneous, and the urgency was such that there was no time to draw up a well-thought-out plan of action or to rationalize the organization. Saving lives was the overriding imperative of the day and the RRC's enthusiasm and vigour were such that its delivery of relief supplies to the hungry achieved a great measure of success. Apart from clearing food aid from the ports and moving it to the hinterland, the RRC also mobilized activists and organized fund-raising committees at the domestic level and formed a relatively dependable assistance-generating system. Consequently, whereas its predecessor, the GDSC, could not get beyond distributing 14,000 metric tons of grain to the famine-stricken areas of Wello and Tigrai in the second half of 1973, the RRC, by publicizing the magnitude of the problem and stirring up public opinion in the interests of the victims, was able to help about 250,000 people in the same regions in the second half of 1974.

The outcome was encouraging. Hundreds of thousand of the starving were quickly fed and given medical treatment and, slowly but surely, brought back to normal life. The Commission's activities, moreover, stretched out to areas inhabited by hitherto neglected minority nationals whose lifestyle was largely pastoral and for whom the drought had particularly severe effects. These minorities, who had suffered from a combination of distance and chauvinism, on the one hand, and a precarious economy, on the other, were rescued by the RRC. Indeed, the Commission brought these marginal communities into the fold of Ethiopian society thus instilling in them a feeling that they were part of the nation.

Distribution of the grain to the relief areas soon proved to be as difficult as obtaining it. The wild mountainous terrain and the lack of communications presented truly massive obstacles. Before the Revolution, few roads had been built and due to the inadequacy of secondary and feeder roads linking the interior with the capital, efforts to reach the famine-stricken areas were often frustrated. For example, of the 170,000 peasants affected by drought in the Negele Borena areas of Sidamo region, only 11,000 could be reached. Bale was practically inaccessible and only 10,000 of the 160,000 in need could be provided with assistance.[2]

Transportation of relief grain was not appealing to private truckers mainly because there were no haul-back loads from the drought areas of the north nor from the southern regions back to Addis Ababa or the ports. Moreover, between November 1973 and May 1974, as the amount of urgently needed relief grain coming to Ethiopia increased, most of the country's private trucks were busy hauling exports and general cargo. This seriously hindered the RRC's attempts to control the famine. The problem was partially resolved by restoring to the pack-animal mode of transportation – donkeys, mules and camels.[3]

Air-lifted trucks, mainly from Britain, the USA and West Germany, along with those procured by the Government from international donors and generous individuals, were rushed to the famine areas. Notwithstanding the Commission's ever-growing responsibilities, the vehicles at its disposal were at that time not at all adequate, either in number or tonnage, to haul the supplies. The Commission, therefore, in agreement with the Swedish Government, arranged to buy 78 Volvo trucks in the early 1980s to bolster its fleet. When these trucks arrived, the RRC commanded a total of 241 heavy-duty vehicles and 349 light vehicles.[4] In order to streamline the movement of goods, the Commission had also set up an Emergency Transport Unit (ETU) in September 1978 to transport mainly food grains from the port of Assab to major storage centres and to distribute the same at food-for-work project sites, particularly in Wello, Tigrai, Harerge, Bale, Sidamo and Gamo Gofa.[5]

In accordance with the agreement reached between the Ethiopian Government and the UN Development Programme, the International Labour Organization (ILO) initially provided two experts, a chief technical adviser and maintenance supervisor, who arrived in Ethiopia in April 1978 to start the project. Their Ethiopian counterparts consisted of a co-manager, head of traffic, finance officer and administrator.[6] In spite of the constraints on the project in the initial stage, the operation commenced in January 1979 with 10 truck-trailers carrying relief grain from Awash Station to the then war-affected regions of Harerge.

As the years have gone by, the RRC's relief work has not been limited only to victims of natural calamities; they began also to be extended to caring for the displaced people and the returnees who fled following Somalia's war of aggression of 1977. At one time, over 2 million people were displaced and the RRC's personnel had to work round the clock to reach and help them. This work increased when shelter was provided for the refugees from neighbouring countries, too. Reinstating the returnees, mainly in the eastern and northern parts of Ethiopia, was quite a challenge. It was met with assistance from donor governments and UN agencies, particularly the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Rehabilitation Work Since the Revolution

The Wello famine of 1972-74 was of course not a supernatural phenomenon that befell the people due to the wrath of God. It occurred because of a variety of contributory factors which have been adequately explained in previous chapters. Drought and famine could not, it became clear, be averted by means only of grain handouts. Such a course of action was likely only to create dependency and possibly might act as a disincentive to productive labour. Long-term solutions had to be sought in the context of society as a whole, in the light of the country's level of economic development, and the relationship between people, land and resources had to be clearly understood. That is why, in spite of the relative paucity of international aid, the RRC regards human and environmental rehabilitation programmes as complementary to relief operations.

The rehabilitation efforts of the RRC can generally be put into three categories:

(a) Self-sufficiency packages

The population living in the drought-stricken areas in 1972-74 fell largely into two groups. The first group consisted of those who were too emaciated and weak to help themselves and who needed emergency food assistance. The second comprised those who could easily recover and resume life within a relatively short period of time but whose draught oxen had perished and who had lost much of their other belongings. They needed only oxen, some head of sheep or goats, agricultural implements and, at times, household utensils, to get re-established. This aid-package was technically referred to as a self-sufficiency package.

The Commission, with funds it was provided by the Government, funds it raised from domestic public and the assistance obtained from various governments and foreign agencies, provided thousands of head of oxen, goats, sheep, selected seeds, household utensils and agricultural implements to reinstate the destitute in Wello, Tigrai, Eritrea, Bale, Harerge, and Sidamo regions. This practice has been going on ever since the mounting of relief operations in response to the 1972-74 drought. Hundreds and thousands of drought-affected and man-made-disaster victims have been made self-sufficient in this way. Special mention in this regard should be made of the Wello farmers who had been hit by the drought but subsequently made self-sufficient. Those of Harerge, Bale and Sidamo regions who were severely affected by the 1977 Somalian war of aggression also fell into this category.

The RRC augmented these rehabilitation efforts with cottage industries. A considerable number of sewing machines were given to people in Eritrea to help them become self-supporting. The Wello-Alamata Women's Handicraft Establishment is a cottage industry that employed women who trained many others in weaving and spinning skills.

(b) Settlement and resettlement programmes

The Commission is convinced that relief programmes should give way to a permanent and economically viable solution, i.e. the settlement and resettlement of people. This option was resorted to when it was realized that substantial areas in the drought-prone regions could no longer sustain life. The basic objectives of the settlement programmes are to settle/resettle farmers and the urban unemployed on fertile arable land, thereby alleviating the nation's acute unemployment problem; to introduce modern animal husbandry to the nomadic population with the eventual aim of combining agriculture and modern animal husbandry; and to contribute to the growth of the national economy by bringing into cultivation hitherto unused or under-utilized land.

By January 1983, there were around 40,000 heads of families representing a total population of 200,000 settled in 83 settlement sites in 11 regions of the country.[7] Enormous domestic and some international resources were put together to finance this programme. The RRC unequivocally stressed the need for settlement/resettlement as a solution to the persisting drought problem and tried everything possible to undertake this task. The response was not, however, as forthcoming as had been hoped for. Nevertheless, the settlers are being organized into farmers' cooperatives in line with the agricultural policies of the country. This is expected to enhance the productivity of the farmers and expedite their economic independence.

(c) Environmental rehabilitation

With respect to rejuvenating the land that is now producing poorly due to overuse and misuse, and to preserve the remaining fertile land, a number of reclamation and soil and water conservation programmes were launched in the northern parts of the country, in Wello in particular.

The introduction of new techniques of farming, distribution of improved seeds, the building of terraces, the launching of massive afforestation programmes and other land reclamation schemes are showing encouraging signs in many areas where the RRC operates. The RRC's attempts to lower the population pressure by transferring people to newer and underutilized land in some parts of the country have not only given the soils a breathing space, but have also enabled the new settlers to become productive members of Ethiopian society. The Kobo-Alamata, the Sirinka and the Golina-Hormat projects, all in Wello, and the Commission's settlements at Harewa in Bale and at Assosa in Welega have contributed much towards the Government's land reclamation and conservation programmes over the past decade.

These wide-ranging achievements explain why the RRC's commitment and dedication have been so commended by so many reputable organizations. The UNDRO Inter-Agency and Multi-Donor Mission which visited Ethiopia from 27 May to 7 June 1980, for example, expressed in its recommendations '. . . its high appreciation of the excellent effort made by the Relief Commission under very difficult circumstances.'[8] Experts in economic development agree that the RRC is one of the best organized agencies of its kind in the Third World and that it is pursuing a policy that is rational, logical and to the point, having cogently analyzed the country's dire situation and understood the dynamics of destruction by drought.

A Look into the Future

These acknowledgements of our strategy and tactics in the struggle against nature's hostility are important because they reinforce our confidence in the steps we have been taking and confirm that our drive in the future should continue to be dynamic. We should follow through in the coming years what we have with so much pain started in the past decade. What Dr. Zaki Hasan, Chairman of UNICEF's Executive Board, has described as 'the Relief Commission's earnest efforts and efficiency'[9] should be consolidated in the future. The essential features of the Sahelian drought have not changed at all; the cumulative effects of critical food shortages and soil erosion have not suddenly altered their impact and taken on a strange manifestation. This is a challenge we have come to know quite well.

The RRC will continue to feed and, most important, to settle the people most grievously affected by the drought. It will go on rejuvenating the degraded lands vacated by the victims in order to make them productive once again in the future.

It is the consensus of all informed opinion that the most effective way to deal with the ravages of drought is to continue to carry out the relief and rehabilitation projects within a clearly thought out development framework. Since the suffering in Ethiopia is partly the result of underdevelopment, all measures which raise the level of social and economic life in the country will serve to reduce the drought's negative effects. This long-term solution requres 'food aid, technical assistance, training and research to increase food production and improve distribution.'[10]

This is the sense in which assistance to Ethiopia from the World Food Programme has had a dual purpose. It has, in the words of Eugene F. Whelan, President of the World Food Council, been used as a 'development tool . . . to help people work on land, water, forestry and fisheries projects and to improve nutrition generally.'[11] The President of the World Food Council took a similar view at the 10th Ministerial Session of the World Food Programme, i.e. that food be used for development as well as in emergencies. More equitable distribution of land and better information to all farmers were also regarded as vitally important to the motivation and productivity of peasant farmers.[12]

The UNDRO Mission also recommended that international donors continue to provide food aid to meet the nutritional needs of the settlers until they become self-supporting, pointing out that: 'Considerable and generous external assistance will be essential to complement the Government's efforts.' It urged that 'the international community and potential donors provide all possible help to put into effect the programme of settlement.' [13]

The resettlement programme which the Government of Ethiopia has been encouraging was not imposed upon the peasants but has grown from the people's own instinct for survival. The need to move to more congenial lands and better pastures was felt by villagers themselves who gathered their possessions and made the long trek away from the drought-prone areas – long before any formal movement of people had been instituted. Particularly during the feudal past, the peasants had to fend for themselves and it was their knowledge of the soil which impelled them to go to where the seeds would have a better chance to germinate and produce crops.

Their movement away from the arid northern regions was utterly disorganized, however. The families in search of better fields had only a vague idea of where exactly they were heading; they didn't know how long they would be on the move. They were literally risking their lives by leaving the barren terraces which brought only a harvest of hunger, for the unknown world filled with hopes of a better life. Many did in fact fall ill on the way and die. It was in an attempt to make the journey safer, to make the drift of people less erratic and more systematic, that the Government's large-scale resettlement programme came into being in the wake of the current drought. So an Ethiopian tradition that goes back at least to the 15th century, of people leaving exhausted lands for places where they can be more prosperous, has been modernized and put on an official footing. The danger has been removed from the migration. There are feeding stations along the way and medical clinics. The villagers are informed as to where exactly the best plots are to be found, and are given the necessary inputs to help them get started when they arrive.

The amalgamation of the RRC and the Settlement Authority which coincided with yet another a severe drought in Wello region in 1979 helped larger numbers of people than ever before to move from the worst-hit areas to the fertile lands in the south-east and west of the country. About 40,000 people in that programme were helped to what they have acknowledged is a greatly improved quality of life; and that movement of people, on an entirely voluntary basis, was the experience on which the present large-scale settlement programme is modelled.

Moving the people, and helping them out of their destitution, has taken a very heavy toll of the Government's resources, however. The recurring drought and the need to mount relief operations on a year-to-year basis has drained Ethiopia's coffers, forcing the Government to direct precious funds away from development projects and thus deferring still further the dream of economic self-sufficiency.

Ethiopia is, by any measure, an underdeveloped country. Its agriculture, the mainstay of the economy, had been growing very slowly even before the cataclysmic sequence of droughts began, due mainly to the imperial land-holding system which gave the peasant farmer very little incentive to increase his productivity.

The lords of the land who exacted tribute in the form of agricultural produce; the soldiers of the royal governments and feudal lords on military campaigns who took what they needed by way of food supplies and who had to be billeted in the peasants' dwellings whether the latter liked it or not – these were the social chains from which the population were freed when the Revolution took place in 1974.

Given the weakness of the economy, it is not surprising that the nation could not hold its own when the rains kept failing and the sources of the food crumbled. It was the certainty in the minds of the peasants that the exhausted land would no longer be able to support them that triggered off the migrations. The Government systemized the movement, both to make the journey to the new lands more convenient for the villagers as well as to lay the foundations for a more productive agriculture.

Regrettably, this colossal effort by a people determined to improve their lot is, yet again, seriously blocked by lack of resources. The Government for its part is doing all it can to improve its financial ability to deal with the demands of the situation. It has involved the public more vigorously in the struggle to overcome the perennial shortages. All working people in the country, especially those on monthly salaries, are donating one month's worth of income over a period of 12 months; this fund-raising exercise began in February 1985.

But this and all the other measures aimed at bolstering the country's financial resources are, unfortunately, not enough, making support from the international community all the more crucial. The range of problems besetting the country are still with us. Shortages of relief food, including vitamin-enriched items, medicine, clothing, tents, blankets, transport vehicles, road-building equipment, storage facilities – these are the kinds of requirements on which donors could usefully focus their attention. Unless such goods continue to arrive in Ethiopia on a more generous scale than has been witnessed hitherto, and in a more systematic manner, then it will be impossible to stem the tide of hardship and suffering and the country's ills will be perpetuated.

Nevertheless, the way in which the problems have been tackled so far is very encouraging. A framework has been set up; energies are being organized efficiently; and whereas previously there was no official concern, let alone involvement, now there are clear-cut goals and a Government in power dedicated to achieving them. No one is more conscious than the Ethiopian people and Government that very much more still needs to be done if the consequences of recurrent drought are to be controlled. It is in this area that moral, material and financial assistance from the outside world can make a lasting contribution to the upliftment of people who have had more than their fair share of hardship.

In the light of the detailed information and the analysis presented in this review of the RRC's activities over the decade since 1974, the objective reader will surely agree that there has been a radical transformation in the approach to the drought since the Revolutionary Government came to power. All relief and rehabilitation work is co-ordinated. Duplication of effort has been reduced to a minimum. There is now an Early Warning System to forecast food shortages. And the part which foreign assistance can play in the long-term solution to Ethiopia's predicament has been enunciated clearly.

The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission has demonstrated, both to the Ethiopian public and to the world at large, that when the political will exists to solve a problem, no matter how daunting, a nation can work itself out of the difficulty. With good will and practical help from the international community, the plans drawn up by the Government and the projects now being implemented are the best foundation for a better future for all the people of our country affected by drought and by man-made disasters.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, BILATERAL DONORS AND GOVERNMENTS WHICH HAVE PROVIDED ASSISTANCE, AT LEAST ONCE, AND THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN WORKING WITH THE RRC DURING THE PAST DECADE

A. UN Agencies

FAO
LRCS
WFP
WHO
UNDP
UNDRO
UNHCR
UNICEF

B. Bilateral Donors

EEC
German Volunteers Service
GTZ (German Technical Cooperation)
Organizations of Netherlands Volunteers
ADB (African Development Bank)
IDA (International Development Association)
World Bank
Governments of the following countries:

Algeria
Australia
Austria
Belgium
Bulgaria
Canada
China
Czechoslovakia
The Republic of Kenya
Denmark
Djibouti
The Federal Republic of Germany
Finland
France
Greece
German Democratic Republic
Hungary
India
Indonesia
Iran
Ireland
Italy
Japan
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Libya
Liberia
Luxembourg
Malta
New Zealand
Netherlands
Nigeria
Norway
Pakistan
Poland
PDRY
Republic of Korea
Romania
Saudi Arabia
Sierra Leone
Sudan
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Tanzania
Uganda
United Kingdom
United States of America
USSR
Yemen Arab Republic
Yugoslavia
Zaire

APPENDIX 1 (continued)

C. List of NGOs currently operating in Ethiopia

N.B. This listing does not include those organizations whose contributions are being channelled through other agencies currently operating in the country.

Africare Ethiopia/Country Representative
Adventist Relief and Development Agency
Air Service International
American Joint Distribution
Baptist General Conference Mission
Baptist Mission of Ethiopia
Care/Ethiopia
Catholic Relief Services
Christian Relief and Development Association (CRDA)
Church of Christ Mission
Concern
Ethiopian Adventist World Service
Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat
Ethiopian Orthodox Church
Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
Food for the Hungry
German Agro-Action
German Emergency Doctors Committee
International Action Against Famine (AICE)
Japan International Volunteer Centre
JRS Mobile Medical Team
Kale Heiwot Development Programme
Lutheran World Federation
Malterser Hospital Dienst – Austria
Medicins Sans Frontières
Menshen Fur Menshen Foundation
Mennonite Economic Development Associates
Mennonite Mission
Missionaries of Charity
Muslim World League (Rabita)
Norwegian Church Aid
Norwegian Save the Children Federation
OXFAM (UK)
Philadelphia Church Mission
Save the Children Federation USA
Save the Children Fund (UK)
Secours Populaire Francais
SOS Enfants Sans Frontières
SOS Kinderdorf International
Society of International Missionaries
RADDA BARNEN – Sweden
Swiss Evangelical Nile Mission
Terre des Hommes – Lausanne
Terre des Hommes – Netherlands
Twenty-Four Hour TV Charity Committee (Japan)
Uptown Church of Christ
World Vision International/Ethiopia

APPENDIX 2

ASSISTANCE RECEIVED FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OVER THE PAST DECADE

(*a*) Summary of International Community Assistance to Ethiopia During the Past Decade

Year	**Value of Assistance in Birr***
1973	1,263,674
1974	12,954,474
1975	10,397,985
1976	6,709,652
1977	15,479,743
1978	42,921,555
1979	38,977,833
1980	70,305,611
1981	89,758,526
1982	110,334,302
1983	133,035,010

* *1 US dollar = 2.07 Ethiopian Birr*

Note: *The major donors were World Food Programme, UNHCR, UNICEF, FAO, UNDP, UNDRO.*

UNICEF: Assistance was mainly in nutrition, emergencies and integrated basic services.

UNHCR: Assistance was primarily for relief restocking and resettlement projects for refugees and returnees.

UNDP/FAO: Assistance was for settlement, agricultural projects, emergencies and technical advice.

WFP: Assistance focused on supply of grain for emergencies and rehabilitation projects.

UNDRO: Emergencies, transport subsidy.

This book does not claim that the listings of the donated items are exhaustive. It is hoped that future editions will incorporate more complete statistics so as to present donor assistance as precisely as possible.

APPENDIX 2 (continued)

(*b*) Summary of Donor Government Food Assistance to RRC Programmes (metric tons)*

Year	Grain	Supp. Food	Veg. Oil	Remarks
1973	45,566	20,736	975	
1974	127,866	21,693	1,381	
1975	33,675	2,480	1,000	
1976	21,900	500	500	
1977	30,462	793	750	
1978	181,555	3,178	3,014	
1979	126,565	4,377	500	
1980	63,856	21,715	1,732	
1981	114,677	225	1,000	
1982	138,170	52	1,940	
1983	122,810	55	1,000	
TOTAL	**1,007,102**	**75,804**	**13,792**	

* *Non-food items provided by governments are not included here because of their extreme diversity.*

APPENDIX 2 (continued)

(*c*) Voluntary Organizations' Contributions in Financial Terms

Year	**Value of Assistance in Birr***
1973	6,308,328
1974	12,019,916
1975	11,372,017
1976	24,088,401
1977	26,540,375
1978	21,547,009
1979	21,814,714
1980	28,329,659
1981	40,807,327
1982	41,838,648
1983	54,014,307
Total	**288,680,701**

** 1 US dollar = 2.07 Ethiopian Birr.*

APPENDIX 2 (continued)

(*d*) International Food Assistance Obtained, January 1984 – May 1985

for RRC distribution:	486,971 metric tons
for NGO distribution:	551,237 metric tons
Total	**1,038,208 metric tons**

APPENDIX 3
OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE TO AFRICAN LDCs

(*a*) ODA per capita in US dollars, by country

Country	1983	1982	1981	1980
Benin	11.24	11.05	13.24	9.65
Botswana	79.17	88.41	80.66	88.73
Burkina Faso	20.65	22.62	24.31	23.25
Burundi	16.21	17.49	14.88	13.88
Cape Verde	126.36	129.09	110.00	118.18
Central African Republic	27.13	28.50	30.33	31.29
Chad	9.20	7.67	6.80	4.39
Comoros	44.86	40.57	50.86	38.29
Djibouti	101.00	111.00	90.75	80.00
Equatorial Guinea	17.43	16.78	14.14	3.95
Ethiopia	**1.94**	**1.83**	**1.81**	**2.18**
Gambia	30.75	33.91	27.59	23.71
Guinea	4.82	4.70	5.47	5.70
Guinea-Bissau	34.17	42.50	52.21	43.38
Lesotho	41.64	38.14	42.29	43.00
Malawi	14.62	14.82	20.46	20.22
Niger	16.86	20.95	20.76	17.80
Rwanda	17.13	18.00	18.65	17.56
Sao Tome and Principe	35.00	38.00	18.00	12.00
Sierra Leone	10.84	17.41	10.53	17.75
Somalia	35.71	31.47	31.07	30.96
Sudan	21.89	17.69	14.59	13.45
Togo	17.18	18.00	13.18	18.61
Uganda	3.20	3.91	5.82	3.13
Tanzania	22.05	24.43	24.48	26.42

Note: *Compiled from UN Economic & Social Council data, 25 February 1985 and population data in the World Bank's* World Development Report 1984.

APPENDIX 3 (continued)

(*b*) Net ODA receipts by country in $ million

Country	1980	1981	1982	1983
Benin	35.7	45.0	40.9	41.6
Botswana	83.5	75.9	83.2	74.5
Burkina Faso	151.1	158.0	147.0	134.2
Burundi	59.7	64.0	75.2	69.7
Cape Verde	39.0	36.3	42.6	41.7
Central African Republic	75.1	72.8	68.4	65.1
Chad	20.2	31.3	35.3	42.3
Comoros	13.4	17.8	14.2	15.7
Djibouti	32.0	36.3	44.4	40.4
Equatorial Guinea	1.2	4.3	5.1	5.3
Ethiopia	**91.4**	**76.2**	**76.9**	**81.5**
Gambia	16.5	19.2	23.6	21.4
Guinea	32.5	31.2	26.8	27.5
Guinea-Bissau	34.4	41.4	33.7	27.1
Lesotho	60.2	59.2	53.4	58.3
Malawi	131.4	133.0	96.3	95.0
Niger	105.0	122.5	123.6	99.5
Rwanda	96.6	102.6	99.0	94.2
Sao Tome and Principe	1.2	1.8	3.8	3.5
Sierra Leone	56.8	33.7	55.7	34.7
Somalia	139.3	139.8	141.6	160.7
Sudan	271.6	294.7	357.3	442.1
Togo	52.1	36.9	50.4	48.1
Uganda	42.3	78.6	52.8	43.2
Tanzania	523.1	484.7	483.7	436.5
African LDCs	2,240.9	2,280.2	2,299.9	2,260.1

Source: OECD: Geographical Distribution of Financial Flows to Developing Countries, Paris, 1984.

APPENDIX 4
TOTAL POPULATION OF ETHIOPIA BY REGION, URBAN AND RURAL, MAY 1984

Region	Total	Urban	Rural	Per cent Urban
Arsi	1,662,233	133,135	1,529,098	8.01
Bale	1,006,491	77,207	929,284	7.67
Gamo Gofa	1,248,034	73,253	1,174,781	5.87
Gojam	3,244,882	263,387	2,981,495	8.12
Gonder	2,905,362	223,562	2,681,800	7.69
Eritrea	2,614,700	407,095	2,207,605	15.57
Harerge	4,151,706	314,601	3,837,105	7.50
Illubabor	963,327	66,171	897,156	6.87
Kefa	2,450,369	150,839	2,299,530	6.16
Shewa	8,090,565	749,262	7,341,303	9.26
Sidamo	3,790,579	249,178	3,541,401	6.57
Tigrai	2,409,700	198,034	2,211,666	8.22
Welega	2,369,677	143,376	2,226,301	6.05
Wello	3,609,918	250,143	3,359,775	7.03
Assab Administration	89,300	31,037	58,263	34.76
Addis Ababa	1,412,575	1,412,575	—	100.00
Total	**42,019,418**	**4,742,855**	**37,276,563**	**11.30**

APPENDIX 5

BUREAUCRACY AND DISASTER: THE 1972-74 DROUGHT

The following table lists the 46 letters exchanged between functionaries (Awsa Awraja, Wello Administration Office and Addis Ababa) of the archaic and now-defunct imperial government in a space of 22 months in their 'attempt' to solve the drought problem in Wello between July 1971-early January 1974. It presents an example of how the imperial officials responded to an emergency during the pre-revolution period. Dates according to Ethiopian calendar.

Name of Official who wrote letter	Position/ organization	Point of reference	Date sent	Addressee	Position
Semie Wodaju	Awsa Administrator	Notifies of the existence of the famine	Hamle 26/63	—	Provincial Administrator
Harmahes	Afar Elder	Cattle that escaped decimation were looted by Issas. Communities should be exempted from cattle tax	Hamle 30/63	Shiferaw W/Yesus	Bati Wereda Administrator
Semie	—	The Bati and Gerefa district people are facing problems because of the drought. Bati town dwellers asked to give support to these people	—	—	—
Regional Administrator of Wello	Regional Administration of Wello	Three-year continuing drought has wrought damage. Dispatch 6,000 quintals immediately	Meskerem 5/64	Getahun Tessema	Ministry of Interior
—	Vice-Minister of Interior	Two man committee sent to study particulars about people to be assisted	Meskerem 28/64	—	Regional Administrator
Semie	—	No assistance has yet arrived. People are suffering	Tikemt 2/64	—	Regional Administrator
—	Minister of State of Interior	Study team has arrived in Wello to assess situation	Tikemt 3/64	Semie Wodaju	—
Abdu Aba Hasain	Elder	People have nothing to eat. The harvest was attacked by pest	Tikemt 9/64	Semie	—
Semie	—	Send us assistance. People have nothing to eat and are famished	Tikemt 21/64	—	Administrator
—	Interior Ministry	Appealed for assistance	Tikemt 19/64 Ref No. 54/2506 & 54/2507	—	Health Ministry Red Cross
Seyoum	Minister of State in Prime Minister's Office	Established Grain Deficit Study Committee	Hidar 1/64	Ministry of National Community Development	Chairman of GDSC
—	Bati District Office	Requested that grain be sent	Nehessie 11/64	Semie Wodaju	—

APPENDIX 5 (continued)

Name of Official who wrote letter	Position/ organization	Point of reference	Date sent	Addressee	Position
Semie	—	Relief grain has not come yet. Send it to us immediately	Hidar 7/64	—	Wello Admin. Office; making reference to letter sent by Bati requesting that people be exempted from agricultural land tax
Semie	—	Bati population has not received any assistance while others have done so even if it is small. So dispatch assistance at once. People are gravely starved.	Tir 23/64	—	Regional Administration Office
Semie	—	Bati's community is in serious starvation condition, rapid deployment of relief essential	Megabit 22/64	—	—
Dej. Kebede Ali Wellie	Deputy Admin. Wello	As per the appeal of Semie relief should be sent immediately.	Ginbot 24/65	—	Minister of Interior
Semie	—	Drought is persisting. We had better provide the people with relief.	Tir 24/65	—	Wello Administration Office
—	Regional Administrator	Awsa people are starved, need immediate relief	Yekatit 14/65	—	Minister of Interior
Assefa Zewde	Awsa Awraja Deputy Secretary	Bati district population is starved to death. Needs immediate relief	Yekatit 20/65	—	Wello Administration Office
Shiferaw W/Leol	Asst. Governor, Awsa Province	People are dying because of lack of food; send grain requested very quickly.	Yekatit 29/65	—	Wello Administration Office
Manyazewal Dagne	Bati Administration Office	The Bati people are starved. They are leaving their place of habitation. They are making arrangements to loot Sengno (Monday) Market Place. We cannot stop them, as the condition of the people, especially children, is extremely bad. Despatch grain as soon as possible.	Megabit 4/65	—	Wello Administration Office
Sheferaw W/Leol	—	People are starved. Rivers are drying up. Grain should be sent within the shortest possible time	Megabit 5/65	—	—
Kelele Hagos	Provincial Internal Administration Assistant Minister, Ministry of Interior	Awsa Provincial people are starved. Send grain immediately	Megabit 5/65	GDSC	—

APPENDIX 5 (continued)

Name of Official who wrote letter	Position/ organization	Point of reference	Date sent	Addressee	Position
Girma Yohannes	Wello Police Chief	Cattle are falling down like house of cards in Awsa because of lack of grass and water. The lot of wild life has become the same as that of the cattle	Megabit 6/65	Unknown	—
Beyene Tesema	Awsa Provincial Secretary	Drought victims are in great number in Bati town in the hope of getting jobs. But could not even get transportation money to go back home. Police need to look after the security of the town.	Megabit 17/65	—	Wello Administration Officer
Semie	—	Bati people are starved. Send grain immediately.	Megabit 29/65	—	Wello Administrator
Semie	—	Emphasized that the starvation level is very high. It is getting worse. It is essential to send grain very quickly	Miazia 11/65	—	Wello Administration Officer
—	Wello Administrator	500 quintal grain is being despatched for Bati district people.	Miazia 11/65	—	Semie Wodaju
Semie	—	Children are suffering from ill care. Send medicine quickly.	Miazia 16/65	—	Wello Administrator
Semie	—	The population of victims in Bati is increasing daily. Send 1,000 more quintals	Miazia 16/65	—	Wello Administrator
—	Wello Administration Secretary	Requested that medicine be sent immediately to Bati as per oral discussion he had with Dr Kibre Ab, Head of Wello Branch of Ministry of Health	Miazia 18/65	—	Wello Branch of Ministry of Health
—	Wello Administrator	As per decision of the Council of Ministers on Miazia 16/65 some 2,000 quintals have been despatched and the distribution should be effected in following manner. 1. Bati – 500 quintal 2. Asaita – 500 quintal 3. Eldar – 500 quintal 4. Dubti – 250 quintal 5. Serdo – 250 quintal Requested that report be sent to him as to the completion of distribution of relief grain	Miazia 24/65	Semie Wodaju	—
—	Wello Administrator	Additional 500 quintals sent to Wello and have given instructions for its distribution in Bati.	—	—	—

APPENDIX 5 (continued)

Name of Official who wrote letter	Position/ organization	Point of reference	Date sent	Addressee	Position
Lieutenant Asefa Hirpo	Chief of Bati Police	Some 72 people, 45 of them children, have died in a month and immediate supply of medicine is essential	Genbot 23/65	—	Bati District Office
Brigadier General Girma Yohannes	Chief of Bati Police	The victim population in Bati has reached the 3,000 mark. Medical care is extremely necessary	Genbot 25/65	—	Wello Administrator
Brigadier General Girma Yohannes	Chief of Bati Police	Message similar to one above.	Date not mentioned	—	Police HQ in Addis Ababa Ministry of Health Addis Ababa
—	Police HQ in Addis Ababa	Communicable diseases have created problems in Bati	Sene 5/65	—	Police HQ Addis Ababa Ministry of Health
Manyazewal Degne	—	The death toll of victims in Bati has gone up to 114; more grain should also come	Sene 5/65	—	Administrator of Awsa
Semie	—	Wrote letter referring to letter above. Manyazewal's letter attached to the letter.	Sene 5/65	Wello Administrator	Wello Administration
Col. Yeneneh	—	The victims in Bati are dying; send medical team.	Sene 6/65	—	Wello Administrator
Kebede Ali Wellie	—	Doctors with adequate medical supplies should be sent immediately	Sene 6/65	—	Wello Branch, Ministry of Health
Kebede Ali Wellie	—	Send medicine very quickly and inform us of condition of people	Sene 27/65	—	Wello Branch, Ministry of Health
Dr Kibreabe Libse Kal	—	Have treated many victims; but medical care is not enough; send more grains.	Sene 28/65	Kebede Ali	—
Kebede Ali Wellie	—	Send more grain and money immediately	Hamle 12/65	Getahune Tessema	Ministry of Interior
Hailu Wedajo	Awsa drought relief coordinator	As government officials *Shoume* and *Meslenes* ask to be bribed while distributing grain to victims, solution to problem is to cancel sub-district offices or to sack the incumbents.	Tahessas 11/66	—	Wello Administration
Aba Shawel W/Mariam	General Manager, Highway Authority	The water-tanker mounted vehicles were loaned to you on the understanding that you will pay the cost of fuel. If it be difficult for you to do this, then we will be forced to cancel the services of the trucks.	Tahessas 26/66	—	Wello Administration

Source: Compiled from Inquiry Commission's report, The Drought in Wello and the Ensuing Famine, A.A., October 1976, pp 12-18.

APPENDIX 6

AID RECEIPT AND DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

A humanitarian organization's ability to bring quick help to disaster-affected populations is in part determined by the soundness of its system of distribution of life-saving supplies which it mobilizes from domestic as well as external sources. In spite of a number of problems which continue to hamper the smooth distribution particularly of relief food, the RRC has been able to discharge its responsibilities as well as its very limited resources have allowed.

This has largely been made possible by the Commission's adoption of a smooth aid receipt and implementation modality built up over the past decade or so. Although the current system needs other inputs for a still higher standard of performance, the RRC has been able to do a lot in the service of disaster-hit people, providing assistance to them both quickly and safely.

On arrival, any donated item initially has to undergo several formalities before any action is taken. The RRC makes sure that any item reaches the targeted beneficiaries through its 288 distribution centres.(1) There the recipients get their share of supplies in accordance with the prior plan charted out by the donor and the RRC and as governed by the procedures and formalities which the Commission adheres to in the distribution of supplies donated from abroad or from domestic sources.

At every stage of the movement of aid, registration and control mechanisms are effected to the satisfaction of both the RRC and the beneficiaries, on the one hand, and the donor on the other.

The procedure for acceptance of aid and its subsequent flow to its destinations is described below:

1. *Aid request: initial action in project*

The donor responds to the aid request of the RRC and processes the same, after which agreement is made relating to the distribution of the item to the beneficiary population, area and time frame of distribution, time of arrival of donated items, and utilization reporting format. This constitutes the first step towards distribution.

2. *Processing of aid: intermediate action*

The donor sends the supplies and passes on the to RRC shipping documents which include bill of lading, invoice, gift certificates, packing lists(2) etc., with advice on the date and place of arrival of the commodity in accordance with agreement entered into. On the basis of this information the RRC alerts its concerned branch office, port and Customs authorities, as well as its clearing agent – the Maritime and Transit Corporation – as to the impending arrival of the relief commodity so that each organization can prepare the necessary facilities at the port, finalize duty free formalities and ready cost estimates for handling and inland transportation respectively.

3. *Arrival of shipment: concrete action*

The donated commodity arrives at port. The handling and inland transportation costs are either paid or the necessary agreement is signed between the RRC and the clearing agent after which the arranged transportation facility is mobilized to haul the relief or other supplies to RRC warehouses and distribution centres. The agent issues notifications on the status of the commodity movement to the RRC until the project is completed.

4. *Delivery of commodity at the RRC store: item approaches point of distribution*

On the basis of details notified to them, the regional or provincial or district branches, as the case may be, register the supply received, countersigning the clearing agent's waybills, copies of which they retain, and issue receiving notes confirming the delivery of the item. They then register the commodity on stock cards and bin cards and enter particulars into central registers, following which they stockpile the same in an orderly manner, preparing it also for fumigation if necessary.

5. *Request and instruction for distribution: victim receives aid*

Upon the instructions of regional, provincial or district authorities, taking note of the particular needs of problem areas, the store manager issues, on the basis of a duly certified warehouse requisition form, the requested amount of commodities to the relief or other department representative who has to countersign the requisition form before withdrawing the item. The representative then distributes the supply to the victims, who come individually or in groups, making sure that each recipient signs, or affixes his thumb print to the list initially drawn by the RRC in cooperation with peasant association and local government representatives.

6. *Utilization report: termination of project*

The stores manager sends the central register to the RRC's provincial branch head for assessment and for the writing of utilization reports which are finally submitted to the donor via the head office.

This process has been adhered to steadfastly by the Commission, but its success has been limited by the prevalence of other intervening constraints which have hampered its smooth flow. These constraining factors included notably the inadequacy of transportation and warehousing facilities with their attendant problems of shortage of funds required for covering a range of costs.

The heavy use of Assab port, the main focus of both import and export flows, coupled with the RRC's ill-organized (until a few years ago) and limited transportation facilities greatly hampered the streamlined movement of relief. But the addition and introduction of bulk cargo handling machines in 1985 and the resultant increase in the discharge capacity of this national port has

APPENDIX 6 (continued)

brought about much greater efficiency in the overall handling of humanitarian aid as well as other cargo. The cargo discharge capacity of Assab now stands at 3,000 mt in 24 hours under normal conditions.(3) This figure was previously 700-1,000 mt. Priority of service at Assab is accorded to cargoes destined for the drought-affected regions. The fact that three of the six berths at Assab port have been made available to incoming relief and rehabilitation commodities(4) show the importance attached to this national problem.

Even as far back as 1984, efficiency at the port had increased so much so that RRC Chief Commissioner Dawit W. Giorgis could confidently say that the ‘introduction of modern facilities such as pneumatic machines and stitching equipment has made a considerable contribution to the enhancement of its efficiency.’(5)

In spite of the bottlenecks enumerated above, the RRC has managed to reach the disaster victims using both modern and the pack-animal modes of transportation depending on the location of the distribution centre. Young and able-bodied recipients provided essential links with infants and the elderly, carrying substantial amounts to those victims who could not make their own way to distribution centres. This pattern of care within the Ethiopian extended family is both traditional and widespread throughout the rural areas.

The coming of the RRC as an institution catering for disaster victims further strengthened the distribution of relief food to those communities inhabiting inaccessible areas. Side by side with overland transportation, small and medium relief transport aircraft were employed in the exacting but necessary ‘food bombing’ operations in such inaccessible areas at the height of the 1972 – 74 drought. A very small number of planes continued to be used in transporting relief to such Ethiopians as were affected by the drought in hamlets far removed from any convenient road.

The effective distribution of relief has been very much dependent on the availability of storage facilities. These facilities, aside from their paucity and dilapidated nature, were until very recently scattered and ill-suited for any proper and strategic storage of relief commodities.

Such, therefore, were the difficult circumstances under which the RRC has been obliged to operate. The Commission was, none the less, well on its way towards improving the transportation and storage facility problems in 1983/84 when the latest and most severe drought began slowly to overwhelm the country. The Commission’s transportation unit was strengthened both institutionally and in terms of facilities. The heavy duty and light vehicles under its possession were conveniently placed in two units for on – and off – main road transport. The first unit covers Assab and the main storage points and the second one covers distribution centres in the hinterland.

APPENDIX 6 (continued)

Together with improved transport facilities, new warehouse construction measures were also undertaken in advance of this gruelling drought period. A modern 100,000 mt capacity store was, for instance, constructed at Nazareth to pave the way for help in an easy clearance and distribution of relief food in a comparatively short time. This new store has already rendered a great service in saving scarce resources and in distribution as well as in other logistical operations. It has facilitated, among other things, the timely movement of relief goods from ports of entry, and as a consequence, potential congestion particularly at Assab has been greatly minimized.(6)

The extreme severity of the 1983/84/85 drought prompted, as we have seen, greatly increased assistance by the international community, thanks to the publicizing role played by distinguished humanitarians and by the media. The generous support which their call evoked helped immensely in combatting the drought and in saving many more human lives.

NOTES

[1] *RRC, data received from Relief Department, April 1985.*

[2] *RRC, note for briefing on RRC internal registration and control mechanism for cash and material assistance, Addis Ababa, Aug. 1983, p.2*

[3] *Maritime Transport Authority, April 1985.*

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *RRC, Assistance Requirements: 1984, monograph, Addis Ababa, March 1984, p.20.*

[6] *Ibid. p.22*

GLOSSARY

Awraja = Province
Bega = Dry season
Belg = Small rain harvest period
Birr = Ethiopian currency
Enset = False banana
Injera = Ethiopian baked bread
Kebele = Urban dwellers association
Kifle Hager = Administrative region
Kuna = Equivalent to 5 kgs.
Meher = Main harvest season
Negarit Gazeta = Proclamation and order gazette of the Ethiopian Government
Rist System = A variant of systems of land holding in Ethiopia during the pre-revolution period.
Wereda = District
Teff = Locally grown grain used as staple food in Ethiopia.

NAMES OF ETHIOPIAN MONTHS AND THEIR EQUIVALENTS IN GREGORIAN CALENDAR

	Ethiopian Calendar	**Gregorian Calendar**
1.	Meskerem	September
2.	Tikemt	October
3.	Hidar	November
4.	Tahessas	December
5.	Tir	January
6.	Yekatit	February
7.	Megabit	March
8.	Miazia	April
9.	Genbot	May
10.	Sene	June
11.	Hamle	July
12.	Nehessie	August
13.	Pagoumen*	

* Ethiopian 13th 5-day month; becomes 6 days in leap years.

Notes:

1. Ethiopia uses the Julian calendar.

2. There is a difference of about 8 years between the Julian and Gregorian calendars.

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Former RRC Commissioner Shimelis Adugna, April 1984.

INDEX

Afars 74, 83, 112, 158.
Agricultural policy (*see also* Agricultural projects, Rehabilitation projects) 23/4.
Agricultural projects (*see also* Rehabilitation projects, Resettlement) 114/6, 138/40, 153, 157/70.
Agriculture (general) 34, 39, 42/3, 47, 69, 143, 215.
Aid for development (general) 207/9, 228; Appendix 3.
Arssi 105.
Awash river and valley and development projects 29, 96, 117, 125, 141, 154, 157, 158.
Bale 93, 96, 102, 105, 110, 113, 117, 131, 132, 133, 135/6, 143, 147, 149, 153, 161, 234, 236, 237.
Bati relief camp 180.
Begemdir (*see* Gonder) 74, 114.
Brandt Report 206/7.
Children's Programme 119/23.
Churches' relief work:
  Ethiopian 86/7, 88, 112, 117, 119, 120, 122, 223.
  international 110, 116, 135, 140, 145, 223; Appendix 1, C.
Coffee 38, 42/3.
Conservation (*see also* Erosion) 24, 114/5, 155/6, 166, 168/70, 237.
Cooperatives 23.
Craft projects 42, 123.
Deforestation 34/5, 155/6.
Distribution and transport problems 212/4, 234.
Djibouti 98, 149, 151.
Early Warning System 109, 127, 171, 172, 226, 241.
Economy (general) 34/5, 38/43, 50/1, 216, 228/30.
EEC 208, 210, 216.
Eritrea (*see also* Secessionist wars) 66, 93, 102, 105, 115, 117, 131/2, 146, 147, 149/50, 158, 236.
Erosion (*see also* Conservation) 15/16, 34/5, 69, 73, 155/6, 158/60, 185.
Ethiopian Nutrition Institute (ENI) 100, 110, 117.
Family reunification programme 119/23.
Famine of 1972/74 19, 43, 47; Chapters 3 and 4, *passim*; 106, 215, 231, 233; Appendix 5.
FAO 112, 123, 172, 207, 210.
France 98, 220.
Gamo Gofa 93, 96, 102, 105, 110, 115, 116, 139, 140, 145, 234.

Germany (East) 13, 220.
  (West) 12/13, 98, 146, 220.
Gojam 58, 65, 70, 158, 188, 189, 192.
Gonder (fomerly Begemdir) 70, 74, 83, 84, 114, 132, 133, 146, 147, 153, 161, 170, 192.
Grain Deficit Study Committee (GDSC) 80/1, 82, 83, 84/6, 88, 232.
Haile Selassie 79, 105.
Harerge 93, 96, 102/3, 105, 109/10. 113 ff., 125, 131, 133, 137, 143/5, 153, 161, 234, 236.
Harar 32, 58, 65.
History (*see also* Imperial regime and feudal order) 31/2; Chapter 2, *passim*.
History of drought and famine Chapter 2, *passim*.
Illubabor 104, 105, 188, 189, 192.
Imperial regime and feudal order 19/21, 66/75, 240.
Irrigation 35, 116, 124/5, 154.
Italy 31, 32.
Kefa 65, 105, 188, 189, 192.
Land reform 21, 22, 47.
Mekalle relief camp 180.
Mengistu Haile Mariam, Comrade 5, 26, 151, 188.
Menilek 31, 58/66, 68.
National Committee for Relief and Rehabilitation (*see also* Relief and Rehabilitation Commission) 26/7, 46, 175, 189.
National Emergency Committee 86.
OAU 150.
Ogaden 93, 109/10, 124/5, 158.
Ogaden war (1977-78) 28, 49/50, 98, 125, 129 ff., 143, 149, 158.
Oxfam 100, 110, 116, 135, 145, 211.
Planning and Plans (Development) 42, 50, 51, 54, 189.
Poland 13, 220.
Population 34; Appendix 4.
Press and media 96, 105, 174, 203, 205, 227.
Red Cross 89, 98, 100, 110.
Refugees 28, 143, 149, 150/1, 232, 235.
Rehabilitation projects (*see also* Agricultural projects, Settlement and resettlement) 101/4, 113 ff., 138/40, 153/4, 206/7, 209, 228, 229, 235/6.
Relief and Rehabilitation Commission *passim*; *especially* 11/17, 25/6, 27/30, 46, 77, 93 ff., 106/9, 127/8, 141/2, 173/5, 209/11, 220, 223/6, 233/5; Appendix 6.
Resettlement, *see* Settlement and resettlement

Revolution 19, 21, 46/7, 75, 89/91, 105.
Roads 118.
Rosen, Count von 97/8.
Secessionist wars 28, 130/1, 149, 214, 232.
Settlement and resettlement 15, 16, 123/4, 135, 141/2, 156/70, 184/201, 236/7, 239.
Settlement Authority 29, 141, 156, 157, 239.
Shewa 26, 58, 62, 74, 75, 83, 84, 85, 87, 88, 96, 101, 102, 103, 105, 110, 113 ff., 132, 153, 158, 160, 181.
Sidamo 26, 93, 96, 102, 105, 110, 113 ff., 131, 133, 137, 140, 143, 153, 161, 171, 234, 236.
Somalia 28, 32, 72, 125, 129 ff., 149, 216, 232.
Stockbreeding 34, 72/3, 93, 115/6, 140, 168.
Sudan 70, 149, 151, 220.
Sweden 97/8, 170, 220.
Tigrai 15, 19, 62, 65, 74, 83, 84, 85, 88, 93, 100, 101, 102, 103, 105, 115, 117, 118, 124, 132, 145/6, 147, 158, 180, 188, 234, 236.
Trade (external) 38, 42/3.
UK 12, 13, 16, 89, 97, 109, 174, 200, 210, 220.
UNDRO 143, 217, 219, 237, 238.
UNICEF 100, 109, 110, 116, 135, 217, 219, 238.
United Nations 13, 100, 135, 151, 172/3, 175/6, 205, 207, 217, 219, 230, 234.
USA 12, 13, 89, 109, 110, 116, 118, 131, 135, 140, 200, 220.
USSR 13, 220.
Voluntary agencies *passim*; *especially* 221/3; Appendix 1, C; Appendix 2 (c).
Wabe Shebelle river and valley and development projects 116, 124/5, 135, 158.
Water supply 24/5, 116, 153, 154.
Welega 58, 65, 104, 105, 133, 140, 160, 161, 170, 188, 189, 192, 237.
Wello 15, 19, 43, 62, 74; Chapter 3, *passim*; 93, 96, 100, 101, 102, 103, 105, 112, 113 ff., 132, 133, 139/40, 146, 147, 153, 158, 161, 169, 170, 180, 188, 192, 233, 234, 235, 236, 239.
Wolde Giorgis, Dawit 173/5, 180, 200, 211.
World Bank 103, 119, 123, 170.
World Food Programme 86, 87, 88, 112, 123, 170, 210, 217, 219, 238.

Design and Production Services by
H&L Communications Ltd., London,
with text editing by Dr. Enver Carim.
All colour photographs by Graham Hancock,
with the exception of pp. 36–37. All other
photographs by the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission.
Thanks also to Dr. Richard Pankhurst, for his advice
and co-operation throughout the project.

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
William Clowes Limited, Beccles and London

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Previous studies of the famine in Ethiopia have tended to emphasise the role of foreign agencies in relief work. This book is the first detailed study of the endeavours of Ethiopia's own indigenous relief agency, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission -- which has been working steadily for more than 10 years to counteract the effects of the recurring drought which the country faces. Because it is written by Ethiopian professionals drawing on unique experience in the field, and because it views the problems from an Ethiopian perspective, it throws a new light on the important subjects of drought and famine.

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